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Pictorial Art in Iceland

By GISSUR ELIASSON



Old Farmhouse At Laugarvatn

Pórarinn B. Þórláksson

In years, and in practical experience, pictorial art in Iceland is little more than a toddling infant, yet it has already taken giant strides along the path of progress. This acceleration is not difficult to account for when the background in which it has been reared is held up to the light for then it becomes apparent that painting is virtually only a new clothing for the "palpable and familiar" in the source of Iceland's literary inspiration.

This brief synopsis will therefore be most faithful if built on the immutable fact that the visual art as well as that of literature and music are only differently constructed branches of the same fundamental life-giving tree. The

essential truth underlying the statement that the various arts as living vital forces all spring from the same creative source, (hinna eilífu uppsprettulind) is self-evident and requires no further elaboration here. Suffice it to say that before anything of lasting aesthetic beauty or artistic significance can be produced the soul of man must first of all quicken to creation and the act of creating. This is the formulative essence of the creative arts, no matter how diverse their external technical construction may be. There are several factors such as economic circumstances, geographic position and the temperament of a nation that mold the outward form in which art manifests itself

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within each country. Those branches of art demanding for execution materials which are difficult to obtain and which require an appreciable amount of preliminary technical study, during years of preparation cannot flourish among a people who live in centuries of impoverishment and ceaseless toil. Such conditions inexorably restrict the demonstration of a nation's inherent artistic ability, not in vitality but in its resources and variety of transmittance. Consequently in Iceland, the verbal art, especially of traditional lore and verse has been almost the only art of a materially poor and isolated people. Thus it is that all the physical and spiritual aspirations, all the hopes, dreams, thoughts and emotions that stir mens' spirits and creative energy have flowed through one main channel—literature. Through this artery has flowed the lifeblood of the nation. In the crystalline depth of poetry and saga is submerged the human drama of this outlying race. Whether this literary stream was swollen with the poignant tears of desolation and despair, the result of unmitigated hardships and economic impingement, or whether into its source poured the great love of land, pride of race and independence, or when into it distilled the simple joys and restrained pleasures of these literal minded country folk, the current was always strong and invigorating, and of a high artistic level of articulation.

Destiny may have shaped the expression of art in Iceland, but the country itself gave it substance and a soul. Out of the rugged mountains, peaked with fire and ice has it been hewn. To its hard-bitten mettle have the ripple of stream and cascade of waterfall given grace and tenderness. It has been taught and tempered by the enigmatic elements of nature, of land and sea; nurtured on the fallow bosom of a soil whose hospitality was ever warmer than its hard-handed tactics allowed. Finally its very spirit has pulsed with the heart-beat of the people that

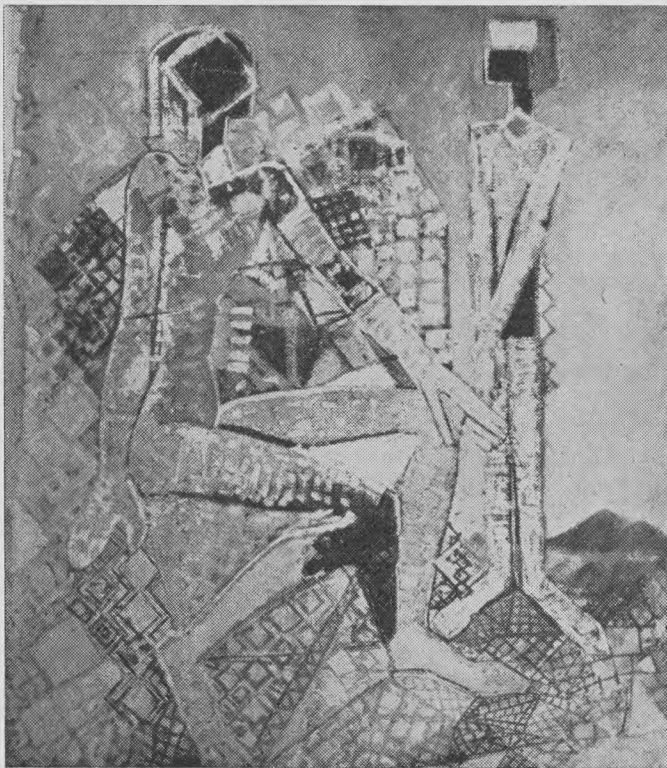
gave it birth and breath. Through Iceland's distinguished poets, and there are not a few in this rank, has been revealed the highest expressions of art emanating from this northern isle. Through her nature poets particularly, like Jonas Hallgrímsson, Einar Benediktsson and others, we have vivid pictures of her colorful landscapes through the superb mastery of descriptive language. Had their inspired artistry flowed from a brush laden with pigment instead of a pen, and with equal fluency they would assuredly have created masterpieces in paint and their canvases would have glowed beyond e'en nature warm. The poet is a familiar figure in Iceland, for most of the native cultural life has been regenerated through him, the painter on the other hand is just beginning to make his profession felt and his voice heard in a land that has long fostered his art without recognizing the terms he employs to give it form and expression. Again it must be remembered that it is not the cloth that makes the monk, and that the artistic heritage which fired the experience and achievements of the man of letters is surely the one predestined to be the driving force in the exploration of the painter.

Against this background, can be seen a group of at least 25 painters who in less than two generations have given constructive stimulus to the origin and growth of pictorial art in Iceland. Sigurður Guðmundsson, an artist of versatility and good taste was the first, to wit, to pioneer this field, but he was unable to acquire a sufficient proficiency to break the fetters which a limited sphere of activity, lack of public interest an isolation wove around his work. The only other painter to appear on the horizon before 1900 was Sölvi Helgason, a vagabond of fiery disposition and restless passions. He was still less equipped to leave any footprints in the path of progress for his pent up emotions through lack of opportunity for proper release, became utterly

misguided and his natural talents impotent.

The new era begins with Thorarinn B. Thorlaksson a man of adult years when he commenced his studies at Copenhagen: After assimilating what instruction old Foss was able to impart he returned to his homeland to paint the landscapes that he knew and loved so well. By his splendid conception of nature and daring treatment of color, his work forshadowed a new comprehensiveness of Icelandic scenery. However, when the annals of Icelandic painting is chronicled, Asgrimur Jonsson will be regarded as the father of landscape painting. He is the oldest of the living artists today, which indicates how young pictorial art actually is in Iceland. At an early age, Asgrimur's inclination leaned strongly towards drawing, and every minute that could be spared

from his daily labors was converted into zealous practice of his art. Despite innumerable obstacles he was able to obtain sufficient funds to enable him to study abroad, at the Royal Academy in Copenhagen and elsewhere. It was not these academic classes however as much as the study of the works of the masters, particularly Rembrant, coupled with the fresh influence of the French impressionists such as Monet that motivated his work. His initial pictures were all composed in the water color technique which he handled most adroitly, but he found oil colors to be more satisfying as a means of expression later in his career. He is primarily a colorist, who makes excellent use of light and shade to enhance his theme, which is conceived in a manner, admirably simple and classical. Most of the succeeding painters have come under his influence,



Bónorð (The Proposal)

Jóhannes Kjarval

but none have imitated his manner or copied his style. He belongs to a group of four who have formed the vanguard of Icelandic painters. These men all have strongly divergent individualities in their work and each expresses with conviction and vigor his respective point of view. In this group besides Asgrimur Jonsson are Jón Stefansson, Guðmundur Thorsteinsson and last but not least Johannes Kjarval, the most idealistic and most unpredictable of them all. Space does not permit of a detailed account of their careers and accomplishments but each is a pillar of strength to their profession. It is more than likely that their most important work is yet to come from their palettes for they are still at the height of their activities, all except Guðmundur Thorsteinsson whose death in early manhood was an irreparable loss to Icelandic art, more particularly because it seems certain that his life-work would have found its consummation in an illustrated edition of the folklore of his country which was dearer to him than all else.

Within hailing distance of these leaders is a larger number of practising artists whose reputation is becoming better established with each work. There is infinite potential strength in the very number of these participants, for with each, pacing the other in the bid for recognition, the standard of work is bound to be very high. Among this group are such men as Finnur Jonsson, Gunnlaugur Blondal, Jón Þorleifsson, Guðmundur Einarson, Snorri Arinbjarnar, Haldór Petúrssen, Eggert Guðmundsson, Þorvald Skúlason, Jón Engilbert, Johann Briem, Gunnlaugur Scheving, Sveinn and Agnete Þorarinsson. Three other women besides Mrs. Þorarinsson, are mentioned as worthy exponents of the painters art. These are Kristin Jónsdóttir, Juliana Sveinsdóttir and Nina Tryggvadóttir. With the improved living conditions, greater opportunities for study, and increased facilities of communication with the continent and the rest of the world, people who had dreamed

of acquiring knowledge in pictorial art are discovering that their dreams are coming true. The turbulence and restlessness which has tossed, not only painting but all modern art on a rough sea of experimentalism and countless other "isms" in almost every country have affected quite noticeably the works of Icelandic painters. The impact of these heterogeneous influences has given more diversity to the character of Icelandic paintings and more variety in the manner of its expression, but it has also added to the surprise and bewilderment of the public which was totally unprepared to accept or appreciate these departures from the conventional and the familiar. All revolutionary tendency is prone to exaggeration, and after the first outburst of protest the public is acquiring a clearer conception of the basic aims and ideals of contemporary paintings and consequently its disposition is becoming more friendly and understanding. Then also, art is returning to calmer, deeper waters after the tempest of bitter opposition between the two divergent concepts of pictorial art—the servile recording of the visible things in a photographic manner, as against artistic creation which depends not on its subject as much as on the intrinsic merit of its composition. In asserting itself this latter view departed sharply and completely from nature and almost destroyed its justification before it returned again to nature, without which no art can exist for long. Though there is still no national school of painting in Iceland and though the raiments of alien influence are still quite evident there is withal a strong unifying ingredient in the present day painting, revealing that it is in wool if not altogether in weave of a common native fibre. The germ of greatness which is already manifest in the bud is fast opening into flower of native genus whose first fruits are laden with promise of larger fulfillment.



Rounding Up The Sheep

Sveinn Þórarinnsson

The accompanying reproductions of Icelandic paintings are printed here by kind permission of the "Ísafold" publishing house, Reykjavik and are representative of three distinctive and typical phases in the "technique" of Icelandic

pictorial art. To the publication, "Art in Iceland" compiled and edited by Kristján Friðriksson this article gratefully acknowledges its indebtedness for its factual and biographic information.

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REQUEST TO OUR READERS

We again ask people of Icelandic extraction to send us photographs and particulars of men and women in the Armed Services of Canada and the United States.

Up to this time we have had to confine our efforts to groups of three or more in a family, but will now be glad to publish pictures of individuals as well as groups. It is our desire to keep as complete a record as possible, and in order to do so we ask your co-operation. Information and photographs of those killed in action is especially requested.

G. Finnbogason, The War Effort Dept.,
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The Realism of Early Icelandic Literature

By PROFESSOR SKULI JOHNSON

★

Iceland has the unique distinction of possessing a complete record of its earliest occupation: two books, in the native tongue, written by Ari the Learned, the Father of Icelandic History, born a year or so after the battle of Hastings. His **Book of Settlements** deals with the origins while his **Libellus** outlines the first two hundred and fifty years of Icelandic history. Ari's emphasis on the factual is characteristic of the entire Early Literature. That literature readily divides into three periods: (1) The Age of poetry (874-1100) (2) The Age of Writing (1100-1300), and (3) The Age of Reading and Collating (1300-1400). In the second of these epochs the great Icelandic family Sagas were written, the Eddic poetry collected and the Scaldic Poetry terminated by the Poetic Edda. The complex saga of the Age of the Sturlungs is the last great work of the age. The last period introduces a transition: the romantic, the foreign, and the mystical replace the realistic, the native, and the intelligible in both verse and prose.

Nowhere is the importance of liberty to letters better attested than in this Early Literature of Iceland. Here we find highly individualized, clear-sighted, energetic lovers of freedom, fleeing from the autocratic encroachment of the Norse monarchy—when monarchy appeared to be the realistic solution for the political and social ills of mediaeval peoples—and embarking upon the seemingly Quixotic enterprise of abandoning continental Europe for the Arctic seclusion of Iceland. That movement encountered the hard facts of existence, and founded the first parliamentary commonwealth on record, under whose auspices there arose a literature, not only surpassing all contemporary writings in Europe, but even ranking with the world's greatest classics. No adequate account of this

literary output can here be given; one of its outstanding features is its realism; its prose and poetry are "immersed in matter;" its Eddic poetry, its Scaldic verse, and its Saga-writings are all essentially in the objective, epic tradition. Indeed, the first named is the Epic poetry of the North.

The Eddic poetry, dealing with gods and heroes, has close affinities with the epics of Homer. Indeed, its rapidly drawn pictures of them are, at times, more realistic than those of the Iliad and the Odyssey. Like Homer, too, it has its quota of historical personages and its budget of actual events, quite as clearly marked. In addition to genuine Scandinavian material, the Eddic poetry includes the Northern recollections of (1) Ermanaric, who ruled over a vast East Gothic kingdom, and died soon after 370 A. D. (2) Attila, the Hun, who terrorized Europe in the first half of the 5th century, and (3) Theodoric, the Goth, who ruled in Italy 489-526. Further, the personages of the great Nibelung story which has the pride of place in the Scandinavian, as well as the German tradition, are identified with the court of King Gundahari of the Burgundians, who was defeated by the Huns in 437 A. D. In general the Eddic poems depict actual scenes of the period of migrations down to the end of the Heroic Age in the West.

Here we find no "otherworldliness," no "faery lands forlorn;" we are everywhere on the **terra firma** of real experience, where men are of flesh and blood, natural in words and deeds, with simple and intelligible motives for all they do. The outstanding men are not **sui generis**; they are simply those who best perform common, and preeminently practical, tasks. Because these are carried out in a comparatively simple society, every detail of their exploits is carefully che-

rished. In the reporting of them, description that would impede the onrush of the energizing is severely relegated to the function of a simple scenic background. Reflection is, for the same reason, reduced to a minimum. These ancestors of the Icelanders were not any more than they "hampered by any extreme organization of politics," nor again, "set in isolation through lack of a popular or national consciousness." Indeed the settlers of Iceland carried with them the concept of a commonwealth, and early developed a national consciousness which found an outlet in realistic writing.

While the Eddic poetry, by reason of its greater simplicity, has readily been translated adequately, and so has become an integral part of universal literature, the Scaldic poetry, because of its intricate construction, remains largely a mystery save to the enlightened few, and even these few are incapable of giving it a really poetic equivalent in another tongue. Yet this poetry constitutes an important chapter in the history of versification, and, in the early literature, takes second place only to the Sagas, to which, in various ways, it makes a significant contribution: in general, the realism of this verse is writ large on the more extensive canvas of the prose.

The verses in the Sagas, whether they are of nobles abroad or of Icelandic men at home, normally provide historical source-material anterior to the stories in which they are imbedded, and are often fundamental to them. Further, the epic characteristics of the poetry frequently influence deeply the style of the narrative. Finally, they are of unique linguistic merit. As there are in Norway almost no Runic inscriptions for this period and none at all in Iceland, where their use came in as late as the 13th century, and then for other purposes, the value of the Scaldic poetry, of the verse in the Sagas, and of the Sagas themselves, is obvious: they are the only remains

on record for Icelandic prior to 1100, i.e. for the history and the form of the language for two centuries and a half. What makes this material all the more precious is its extremely high literary quality. The Icelanders, from the first, possessed a natural pride in good language—a characteristic that still persists in Iceland—and they were endowed with a keen critical acumen—another, sometimes inconvenient, national trait—which early led them aright in diction, metrics and grammar. The bearing of poetry on questions of this kind was fittingly recognized by the Icelanders themselves at an early time: in the first of four treatises dealing with early Icelandic, written in 1140, it is definitely stated that "the poets are the supreme judges of correctness in form and pronunciation." In thus establishing the rule of experts, the Icelanders of old were essentially realistic and practical.

While the Scaldic poetry of the court shows little variety, the occasional verse of the Icelandic Sagas is infinitely diversified; the pieces are more highly individualized and the outlook is more democratic. Lyric verse as such, is, however, seldom found even here, for the poets are still under the Eddic spell, and epic realism leaves little room for personal reflection. For the same reason this northern poetry seldom sounds the elegiac note; in it, it has been appropriately observed, sorrow finds an outlet in action. Furthermore, Icelandic verse includes very little in the way of satire; this is noteworthy in view of the national tendency to jibe and jest. The founders of the Icelandic commonwealth knew their own folk, and imposed by law severe penalties for the making of lampoons; indeed, "Gray-Goose," an early law compilation of Iceland, forbade the making of poems of praise or blame about anyone. It was feared that even encomia might sow dissention and ill-will in the young republic, which lacked the unifying authority of a real executive. As a

gloss of Adam of Bremen put it, "*apud illos non est rex nisi tantum lex*:" "Among them is no sovereign save only the law," and the law was not, alas, sufficient to restrain the Vikings of that freedom-loving and turbulent age.

The earliest Scaldic poets composed about pagan gods and ancient heroes, yet in a realistic way. They were often acknowledging the gifts of princes, or of other great men, in the shape of shields. These were normally inscribed with the exploits of legendary gods or heroes, and of these scenes the poets wrote. Bragi the Old (ca 800-850) is the first of these poets, fragments of whose verse are still extant. The shield, of which he wrote, depicted the fate of King Ermanaric and his brothers; the entire poem was an encomium on the giver, Ragnar, and the refrain makes a distinct reference to the shield and the scenes on it. The latest "shield-poems" are composed by Egill Skallagrímsson in Iceland, one on a shield given him by a brother poet, Einar Jinglescale (ca 970), and the other on a shield sent to Egill from Norway, a few years later (ca 975). These shield-pieces are in sharp contrast to the passages on imaginary shields in the epics of Homer and of Vergil, whose budget of details is well-nigh incredible. Kindred to these Icelandic poems on actual shields are such pieces as the Encomium of the Hall by Úlfr Uggason (ca 985): this poem described the carvings on the wooden panels in the great hall of Olafr Peacock at Herdholt; they were scenes from legends about the gods—Baldr, Loki, Thor,—and the Earth's Serpent.

The court of King Harald Hair-fair was famous for its bards. After his victory at Hafursfirth, 872, had made him supreme, Harald set about the task of making his palace the centre of poets. According to Egilssaga at his court "bards were honoured beyond all others, bedecking the second place of distinction in the hall; inmost sat the

eldest of the bards of his father's court". This prominence of poets at the Norwegian court lasted down to the end of the 13th century, i. e. beyond the life of Iceland's free republic.

From the 10th century onwards there are pieces associating these sovereigns with the praise of gods and legendary heroes. The first are, of course, about Harald himself. Other early Scaldic verse celebrates chieftains of whose exploits the poets had been, if not partners, at any rate eye-witnesses. It has been estimated that the number of Scaldic poets reached the grand total of two hundred. Their epoch, which is the most glorious in the annals of early Icelandic, reaches its close ca 1100. Yet among the land-claimants in Iceland there were only a few poets—the remnants of verses by only three are extant—this is interesting in view of the fact that Iceland was the only region in which poetry anterior to, or contemporary with, the land-settlement was recorded. The first "court poet" was Glúmr Geirason (ca 930-ca 980) an "Eastman" who came late to Iceland; he was the favourite bard of King Harald Greycloak. To his grandson the poet Stúfr, King Harald Hardredy remarked "A good poet are you if you compose not worse than Úlfr." After that the stream of Icelandic court poets is well-nigh unending. No wonder it is that a Norse historian facetiously remarked that the poetry of the Icelanders was a sort of national industry.

There is no room to enlarge here upon the metrical intricacies of the Scaldic verse, which makes its reproduction in another language almost impossible. Sir Edmund Head, who translated *Víga-Glúms Saga*, refers to the stanzas in it as "scraps of poetry which are often difficult to make out. They have little merit and I have done no more than paraphrase their general meaning." Again, George Hight, who did *Grettis Saga*, in *Everyman's*, makes these observations on the verse that he there found: "I am afraid the truth must be

told that these verses are not poetry at all in any true sense but a monstrous dislocation of sentences into certain patterns of versification, excessively puzzling but not even ingenious in design." These unfortunate and unfair remarks on Scaldic poetry emanate from the excessively elaborate verse-forms. Snorri Sturluson, in his Eddic key to metrics, adduces instances of over a hundred distinctive verse varieties in Scaldic poetry.

Paradoxically this difficulty of translating and even of understanding the Scaldic verse arises from its realism; it is due to its employment of metaphorical periphrasis, which, without exception, is founded on concrete imagery. The use of metaphors arose from the brevity of the line-lengths in Icelandic (to which long lines have always been essentially alien). The simplest metaphors consists of two words. Each of these may be resolved in turn, and the process is limited only by the poet's creative fancy and his metrical dexterity, likewise—and this is most important—by his artistic and critical faculty as to good taste. The rigorous Eddic rules about alliteration, assonance, rhymes, perfect and imperfect, rendered it necessary to distribute the words of the metaphors over perhaps several lines in a stanza. This became very complicated, even in a highly inflected language like Icelandic which relies very little on the word-order. No one could gather the meaning of a verse unless he possessed the key to the metaphorical circumlocutions. Needless to say, the best poets guard against excessive employment of these, but even they are not easy to understand, for they are learned poets, and presuppose in their readers, knowledge of Eddic rules of versification.

The Scaldic bard thus required much more than a natural aptitude: he had to learn and master fully intricate metrics, he had to acquire a copious poetic diction, and he had to have at his disposal much lore, both legendary

and historical, out of which to weave the web of his metaphors. This sort of poetry entailed therefore long and assiduous apprenticeship. Templegarth-refr says, in a poem on his foster-father Gizur Goldbrow (who fell at Stiklestead, 1030), that he had often "brought him unto the holy beaker of Woden" i.e. instructed him in the art of poetry. Einarr Jinglescale, mentioned earlier, often discussed poetry with the great Viking bard Egill: the influence of the latter is evident in Einarr's extant verses. The enthusiasm of these bards for their art is, however, not pedantic: "I possess the gift of Woden's discovery" jubilantly one of them exclaimed: he felt that within him was an afflatus divine. "I have a good poem" is almost a conventional assertion by Icelandic bards abroad; in most instances they made good their boast. Nowhere is the poet's feeling for his inspiration better phrased than by Egill: it is his only balm of woe for the loss of his sons, it is the only thing in the world that reconciles him with Woden.

Certain Icelandic families earned a high reputation not only for composing poetry, but also for transmitting orally large budgets of verse made by others. To such a family did Stúfr the Blind, already referred to, belong; on one evening he entertained Harald Hardredy with thirty minor encomia (**flokkrar**); when the king asked him whether he knew no major encomia (i.e. **drápur** possessing a refrain—**stef**), he replied that he knew no fewer of them and would entertain with them later. Poems were recited not only for entertainment but also for their educative (i.e. historical) value. Þormóðr Coalbrowskald (ca 997-1030) was especially skilled in the art of recitation: "Now he entertains the king (Canute) says the story and it is a common report that he does it better than all the others." And at the last, just before the fateful fight at Stiklestead, he recited **Bjarklay the Ancient**, and chanted the verses aloud so that his voice carried throughout the

host and men thanked him for the poem—they were much impressed and deemed it well chosen—and the king gave him a gold ring as a reward. These stanzas were known to Saxo Grammaticus who translated them into Latin.

Princes prized these ecomia made on them by Scaldic bards, so much so, that often a new arrival could establish himself at the hall of a king or chieftain by the recitation of an appropriate poem. Again, at times potentates accepted Headransom-poems from bards who had incurred their disfavour. Such a piece did Bragi the Old, mentioned before, compose for King Björn of Sweden; a similar poem had his father-in-law, Erpr, made for King Sour at the Howe. The best known Headransom in Icelandic was made by Egill Skallagrímsson in honour of King Eric Blood-axe at York in 936. Such poems are not excessive in praise; Snorri Sturluson (d. 1241), in his Preface to the **Heimskringla** aptly says: "It is the manner of poets to praise most highly those whom they are addressing but no one would dare to tell the king himself deeds which he and all the hearers knew were but windy talk and lying, for no praise would that be, but mocking rather." Indeed, bards could be surprisingly independent in their attitude to their patrons; a notable instance is Sighvatr Þórðarson (ca 995-ca 1045) whose outspokenness to Olaf the Holy and to Magnus the Good is a matter of record. On the other hand, patrons usually had a sound attitude to the service of bards: theirs was the primary function to sing of facts: King Olaf the Holy, just prior to his fall at Stiklestead, put the matter clearly; addressing his bards and bidding them enter the shield-burg, he said: "Ye shall be here and see all the tidings which here shall be done; then there will be no need for others to tell you the tale, for ye shall be the tellers thereof, and sing of it afterwards".

Wherever men of Iceland journeyed or dwelt, they not only wrote Scaldic

verse but helped to make history, and, at times, took the initiative in assembling it. This impressed the historian Saxo (ca 1200, mentioned previously) who praises the Icelandic writers for their unbiassed attitude to the histories of other lands than their own: "Indeed they account it a delight to learn and to consign to remembrance the history of all nations, deeming it as great a glory to set forth the excellences of others as to display their own". Thus factual verse and factual prose go hand in hand in early Icelandic.

Though there is thus imbedded in this literature invaluable material on the lands adjoining the North Sea, on places as widely sundered as Byzantium and Sicily and the east coast of America, the most realistic writing is found in the Icelandic Family Sagas, whose earlier oral transmission set the seal of dramatic realism upon them. In this respect they are similar, whether they be Sagas of single episodes, or single families, or complex tales; whether they deal with local feuds, love-affairs, outlawry, or revenge, or with the story of an entire countryside. The greatest writings in this genre are perhaps four: (1) **Egilssaga** (Translated by W.C. Green, 1893 and E.R. Eddison, 1930): the story of the Viking bard frequently mentioned in these pages (2) **Laxdæla Saga** (trans. by Mrs. M.C. Press, 1899, R. Proctor 1903, and Th. Veblen, 1925): a story of the countryside, with a great love-story imbedded in it, rendered well known by **The Lovers of Gudrun** in **The Earthly Paradise** of William Morris. (3) **Eyrbyggja Saga** (trans. by Magnusson and Morris, 1892): also a tale of wide scope, with a good deal of politics and antiquities. Bryce, in his **Studies in History and Jurisprudence**, deals with the miracle at Fróðá cited in this Saga. (4) **Njáls Saga** (translated by Sir George Dasent, 1861), is a Saga dealing with Law and the doings at Parliament, which also has in it the story of Gunnarr, and refers to nearly every person of importance

in Iceland in the best period of the Golden Age.

These masterpieces of realistic prose are as difficult to appreciate adequately as are the tragic dramas of the ancient Greeks. They show the same intense preoccupation with character, the same tragic imagination controlled by the limits of the tradition, and have the same clear-eyed vision of the end. Only one of the major Sagas—The Confederates—is comic in spirit and it comes significantly near the close of the Saga period. On the other hand, comic personages, comic situations and comic occurrences are to be found in most of the Sagas; this makes them like Shakespeare's tragedies with their interspersed comic scenes, true transcripts of life.

The technique of the Icelandic Sagas seems to have been in the minds of Icelandic writers from the first; even in the Book of Settlements (of which men-

tion was made at the outset) there is found a story which is really an Icelandic Saga writ small; Israel Gollanz in his Preface to *Hamlet in Iceland* (the Ambales Saga) seems to miss the importance of this episodic saga; but Dame Phillpotts, in her *Edda and Saga*, with the unerring instinct given to women, sees the full significance of it. It illustrates on a small scale what W. P. Ker, formerly Professor of Poetry at Oxford, regarded as "the real secret of the Icelandic mind . . . the remarkable thing in the sagas", the viewpoint "that nothing is really valuable except the individual character." "Hence", he says "the inexhaustible beauty of their storytelling. It is founded on a sense of reality, an imaginative knowledge of character." "This intense limitation of interest," he adds, "this dramatic view makes the Icelandic Sagas utterly different from all the rest of the world."



BE STILL

By HARRIET G. MCGRAW, M. D.

When entering into silence, I concentrate on Thee
And Thou restoreth my soul.
I have no fear of evil, when Thou art near,
Source of all Good.
Thankfulness fills my heart with joy.
When I meditate on Thee, Life's springs are purified.
My mind is renewed and life's mysteries are unfolded.
The thoughts inspired by Thee, recreate my whole being.
They illuminate its every recess.
When I surrender my will to Thine,
Thou annointest me with the oil of freedom.
I am ever comforted by Thy staff.
Thy word is the bread of life.
Thy goodness and mercy follow me now—
Yea, sweetly and silently, always.
I dwell in Thy presence, now and ever,
And reap a calm aftermath from life's harvest.
Holy joy, harmony and peace
Bid me be still and know Thou art God.

Iceland and the War

By BENEDIKT GRÖNDAL



Editor's note: The author of this article is a student from Iceland who is taking a course at Harvard University in preparation for a career in journalism. Mr. Gröndal is not unknown to us of the West. He was in Winnipeg last summer and while here wrote a number of reports in the Icelandic weeklies. These reports show that he has already passed the first stages in the art of writing and that he possesses many of the essentials of a successful journalist.

This magazine welcomes instructive articles not only from Icelandic students who happen to be attending American and Canadian Universities, but also from representative men and women in Iceland.

For over a thousand years isolation has protected Iceland. As long as the Atlantic could be crossed only in slow moving ships, the Arctic country was seldom directly affected by wars in Europe or America. It is true that wars have made the supplying of Iceland difficult, and caused such peculiar incidents as the rule of Jörgen Jörgensen in 1807, but aside from that the Icelanders have been but spectators to the struggles of their distant neighbors.

During the last five years this has completely changed. With the emergence of the air-age, distance has virtually disappeared, and Reykjavik is now within a few flying-hours time of the capitals of Europe and America. Furthermore, Iceland has in this period become an independent republic and has taken her place among the free nations of the world.

Considering this from the perspective of the great war which is now being fought all over the world, several questions are apt to come to our mind: What is Iceland's position in this gigantic struggle? Where are Iceland's sympathies, and what has she done to forward the cause she favours?

Military Importance

As has already been mentioned, Iceland has been untouched by the wars of history because of her geographic isolation. At the outbreak of the present war it was, however, obvious that this isolation was over; the island was easily within range of airplanes, fast

warships and even submarines. Iceland could be made an important air and naval base from which the entire North-Atlantic could be dominated.

We have good reason to believe, although substantial evidence is lacking, that the Germans had gathered all necessary information about Iceland and were ready for military operations. The gathering of this information was covered by cultural pretences, against which the Icelanders could do nothing, even if they had been aware of the true nature of the work of the Germans.

This German interest in Iceland culminated early in 1939, before the outbreak of war in September, when the Luft-Hansa airline company asked the Icelandic government for permission to build airbases in the country. **The Icelandic Government flatly refused to give such permission, in spite of the obvious commercial advantages it might gain from such bases on the island.** Thus Iceland became one of the first of the small nations to resist German plans of expansion. What Germany could have done, if she had had bases in Iceland in the beginning of the war, is obvious.

Not until the German war-machine was rolling northwards did Britain and the United States show any interest in Iceland. The British were determined to let no one interfere with their mastery of the sea, and on April 11, 1940, Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, declared in the House of

Commons that "no German will be allowed to set foot there (in Iceland) with impunity."

Later in that same month, April 1940, the United States sent Bertil E. Kuni-holm to Reykjavik as a Consul, more for observation than to promote commerce.*

Meanwhile Denmark was in German hands and all connections between Iceland and that country were severed. The Althing immediately entrusted the Icelandic Government with the powers of the King, which he obviously was unable to exercise, and also gave the government charge of the country's foreign affairs, which under the Union Act of 1918 were to be safeguarded by the Danish Government.

Thus, as it was obvious that Iceland would become entangled in the war, the country was entirely on its own feet and full responsibility for making the important decisions which lay ahead, rested with the government and Althing in Reykjavik.

British Seize Iceland

With anxiety and grief the Icelanders watched Germany overrun Norway and Denmark in April 1940. They knew that they could not stay out of the way of this war themselves, and the question was only: Which would be first to land in Iceland, the British or the Germans?

It was with considerable relief that the Icelanders on May 10, 1940, saw British troops land in Reykjavik. Not that they were willing to greet any invading force, but rather that they felt that their lot had been the lesser of two evils. There was, of course, no opposition, as Iceland is unarmed and has only a police force of 100 men for the maintenance of order. Only because the janitor was in bed, did the Royal Marines have to break the door of the Radio-Telegraph building. The only place

where resistance was considered possible, the German consulate, was taken by a planned attack.

The same day as the troops landed in Iceland, the Foreign Office in London issued a statement. "Since the German seizure of Denmark," it said, "it has become necessary to reckon with the possibility of a sudden German descent on Iceland. . . . His Majesty's Government have accordingly decided to prevent this possibility which would deprive Iceland of her independence by themselves landing a force in Iceland. . . . This force will be withdrawn upon conclusion of hostilities."

We have no reason to doubt Britain's sincerity in sending troops to protect Iceland, but it must be remembered that what she had done was essential for her own safety and for the security of her lifeline across the Atlantic. She had also deprived the Germans of their first major stepping-stone to the American continent.

The British forces which landed in Iceland brought with them Mr. Charles Howard Smith, who had been appointed His Majesty's Minister to Iceland. Thus they recognized the country's independence the same day as they occupied it militarily.

The Icelandic Government now had to make an important decision. How was it to respond to the military occupation of its country by a foreign power? In such cases there are usually two modes of response: cooperation or resistance. The Government decided on the first and the British Minister was accepted. **This cooperation was most important to the British, as it greatly facilitated their first occupation of neutral territory in the war, at a time when they were heavily pressed on many other fronts.**

The Icelanders could have made only passive resistance. Had they chosen that course, they could have created most embarrassing difficulties for the British, and provided the Germans with excellent propaganda material.

*Shepardson and Soroggs, **The U. S. in Foreign Affairs 1940**, Harper and Brothers, N. Y. and London, 1941, page 133.

The people fully realized their good fortune in having Iceland seized by the British and not the Germans. In Norway they saw the Nazis at work and realized better than ever what a German occupation meant. It was, furthermore, obvious that if the Germans had established themselves in Iceland, the British would at the earliest possible moment have attacked the country in order to secure their lines of communication to America.

Shortly after the British arrived in Iceland, Canadian troops were also sent there to participate in the garrisoning of the island.

Americans Take Over

For over a year the British occupied Iceland. The war was going badly for them and they suffered defeat after defeat. Seizing Iceland was one of the most significant offensive actions which they had taken, and in the long run it proved of no small importance to them.

During the winter 1940-41, Britain was as close to defeat as she ever was. She needed every man for her own defence and to secure Egypt, and it soon became obvious that she could not spare the troops she had in Iceland; they were needed elsewhere. There was only one hope: The United States.

On June 24th, 1941, the British Minister to Washington informed President Roosevelt that the army in Iceland was needed badly elsewhere and would be withdrawn. There is good reason to believe that President Roosevelt did not want to see the Germans in Iceland, and was willing to do everything he could to prevent the country from falling into their hands, because of the security of the Western Hemisphere. If Iceland were a part of the American continent, a United States occupation could have been justified under the Munroe Doctrine. But the Geographer of the State Department decided it was not so that was out of the question. The only alternative seemed to be to get Iceland's consent to an American mili-

tary occupation of the country. This way was chosen and the Icelandic Government was informed of the contemplated step.

This was the second occasion upon which the Icelandic Government had to make an important decision. Should it make the agreement which the United States and Britain wanted, or should it stick to absolute neutrality and refuse to permit any military occupation of its country? The Icelandic Government did not hesitate. Without delay it made a treaty with the United States by the terms of which that country was permitted to take over the military protection of Iceland.

This agreement was made in great haste. Six days after the British Minister informed President Roosevelt that the troops in Iceland would have to be withdrawn, the treaty was signed, and seven days after the treaty was signed, on July 7th, 1941, the U. S. Marines landed in Reykjavik. There is good reason to believe that the United States would have taken over the defence of Iceland under some pretence, even if the Icelanders had not agreed to make the treaty. But any arrangement except the one made would have been hard to explain to the isolationist elements, then still strong in the U. S., and if American troops had occupied Iceland without Icelandic consent, it is doubtful whether President Roosevelt could have signed the Atlantic Charter with clear conscience that same summer. **Iceland's cooperation thus greatly facilitated this important change for Great Britain and the United States, and again deprived the Germans of good material for propaganda.**

American troops under the command of Major-General Charles H. Bonesteel took over the defence of Iceland. A German invasion of the country was considered quite possible and the Americans did their best to prepare for it. Slowly Iceland was turned into a bastion, protecting the supply lines between America, Britain and Russia. Air bases were

built from which heavy bombers patrolled the sea and hunted U-boats; naval bases were constructed where convoys could rest and refuel.

The Icelanders Help

I have now described the general military situation in Iceland during the first two years of the war, and I have pointed out how the Icelandic authorities cooperated with the Allies. Now I should like to mention a few more specific Icelandic contributions to the Allied war effort.

Iceland has a considerable fishing fleet and the island is surrounded by some of the world's richest fishing banks. Annually the Icelanders catch about 7000 pounds of fish per capita, more than any other nation, which is so much, that if they were to eat it all themselves, every soul in the country would have to eat 20 pounds a day, 350 days of the year! Since the war broke out, this tremendous output has gone almost entirely to England, where it represents a large part of that country's fish supply and consequently its supply of protein. Foreign Commerce Weekly, a semi-official magazine published in Washington, acknowledged this valuable contribution when it stated: "At the present time, Icelandic fisheries are not only important to that country (Britain) but are also indispensable to the United Nations' war effort."

The Icelanders not only catch this fish, but they also bring it to England in their trawlers, and this in spite of the German blockade of that country. Thus they save important shipping space for the British. These trawlers, as well as smaller fishing vessels around the coasts of Iceland and several passenger ships, have been attacked by German submarines and airplanes, the ships sunk and the crews killed or wounded. These losses have amounted to 1.75 a thousand for the whole nation.

When the first British troops came to Iceland, there was no airfield in the country. Now it is an "unsinkable air-

craft carrier in the North-Atlantic," to use the words of a German radio commentator. Many air bases have been built and they were built as soon as possible to provide air defence. During the construction of these bases, the British were short of men, and they appealed to the Icelanders for laborers. Soon 3000 Icelandic workers were laying runways, building hangars and barracks. In Iceland 3000 is a great number, corresponding to 3,000,000 in the United States, which even there is a considerable force. This contribution is even greater if we consider that there was no unemployment in Iceland at the outbreak of war, and that this war work consequently brought about considerable shortage of labour for civilian purposes.

Icelandic Attitude

Before the war, Iceland was subjected to heavy German propaganda, both cultural and political, while the United States and Britain showed her little or no interest. But even that was not enough to shake the centuries-old democratic beliefs of the Icelanders, and an overwhelming majority of them, sometimes estimated at 98%, have from the beginning sympathized with the United Nations.

For a small community like Iceland, it is immensely difficult to have a large army suddenly thrown into its territory. At first you could, on a rainy day, see the housewife send kids with hot coffee to the soldiers on guard outside her house, but soon the soldiers increased in numbers and she could not do it any more. Cafés, movies, ballrooms and shops became overcrowded and life became bothersome. If there were at one time 60,000 troops in Iceland, as the German radio estimated, there were about twice as many soldiers in the country as there are Icelandic families. It is obvious that only a fraction of them could ever get acquainted with the people and get invited to their homes.

Thus the soldiers' life in Iceland be-

came quite lonesome and boring with the inevitable result that many soldiers do not speak very well of the country, and even unjustly accuse the Icelanders of Nazism.

In spite of these difficulties, the relations between the army and the population in Iceland is better than could be expected, in fact, better than it is in most other places where conditions are similar. This relationship is a striking contrast to the German occupation of Norway.

Conclusion

No small, unarmed nation can make a greater sacrifice than to lend its own territory to another nation for military purposes, as Iceland has done. This, and her close cooperation with the United States, are her major contributions to the Allied war effort. **If we consider this, and the other specific contributions mentioned above, in the light of Iceland's small population, we**

must conclude that more could hardly have been expected of Iceland even if it had been at war.

The Icelanders thus have shown their traditional love for freedom and democracy and their hatred of oppression. The fate of Norway has convinced them better than anything else that they are fortunate to be in the Allied camp.

Iceland has had no Pearl Harbor and no Dunkirk, and the Icelanders hardly realize the extent of their contributions to the war themselves. To them this period in their history will be most of all memorable because on June 17th, 1944, they re-established their ancient republic, and took their place among the free nations of the world. Trusting that the Allied forces will be withdrawn from their country, as promised, when the war is over, the Icelanders look forward to a time of peace, to a time warranting more fully a belief in the saying of Socrates that "society exists for some good, moral purpose."

READERS are invited to send in news of people of Icelandic extraction, especially our soldiers overseas. Original articles and poems as well as translations from the Icelandic would be appreciated. Letters to the Editors may be published. You are invited to let us know what you think of our publication.

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A Historic Visit to Iceland

By Dr. RICHARD BECK

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It is not every day that one is privileged to be present at and take part in historical events marking the regained freedom of one's native land. This rare experience was the great good fortune of the writer, when as representative of the Icelanders in the United States and Canada, on invitation of the Icelandic government, he participated in the national celebration at Thingvellir, the famed site of the ancient Icelandic Parliament, on June 17 this summer, when Iceland was proclaimed a republic. For all Icelanders, whether residing in the old homeland or outside its borders, this was and will remain an unforgettable day. The greatest and most cherished dream of the Icelandic nation had been realized; Iceland had again become a republic.

Again is indeed the word in this connection, because back in the year 930, when the Icelandic Althing (Parliament) was established, Iceland likewise became a republic, the first one in Europe north of the Alps, and the old Icelandic free state continued as such for over 300 years. The day of the re-establishment of the Icelandic Republic, therefore, was a memorable one to an unusual degree, historic in more than one sense, for the proclamation of the Republic at Thingvellir on June 17, took place on the same spot where the Icelandic Althing and the old Icelandic free state were established over a thousand years ago.

Rich and cherished historic associations also surrounded the very date selected for the re-establishment of the Icelandic Republic, June 17, the birthday of Jon Sigurdsson, Iceland's greatest statesman and national hero, the George Washington of Iceland. Above anyone else he had consecrated his life and work to the cause of Icelandic indepen-

dence, and hence it was most fitting that his birthday should mark the rebirth of the Icelandic Republic. It was in a special sense a day of gratitude, joy and hope.

During the later part of May this year, the Icelandic people had, through a national plebiscite, overwhelmingly voted in favor of abrogating the Union Act of 1918 with Denmark as well as in favor of establishing a republic. The general popular interest in the question is indicated by the striking fact that over 98 per cent of the voting population took part in the referendum, indeed a recordbreaking performance. The will of the Icelandic people clearly manifested itself through this exceptional referendum. Later the Althing unanimously confirmed the action of the people, previous to the proclamation of the Republic at Thingvellir on June 17.

In that connection the fact may likewise be emphasized that the Icelanders acted in full agreement with the Danish-Icelandic Union-Act of 1918, which provided that they could, through a national referendum and ratification by the Althing at the end of 25 years, that is after 1943, abolish the Act. The Icelandic Althing had several times, by the adoption of special resolutions, declared that the Union Act would not be renewed by Iceland at the close of the 25 year period in question. Moreover, since the German occupation of Denmark in April, 1940, when all direct communications between the two countries were interrupted, the Icelanders had completely taken care of all their interests both at home and abroad. In fact, on May 17, 1941, the Althing passed three historic and far-reaching resolutions, declaring, among other things, "its will that a republic be established in Iceland as soon as the Union

with Denmark has been formally dissolved." At the same time the Althing elected Mr. Sveinn Bjornsson as Regent of Iceland.

The re-establishment of a free and independent Republic in Iceland this year therefore did not come as a surprise. And this final step in the long struggle for regained independence on the part of the Icelanders was only a natural expression of their deep-rooted love of freedom and in no way the result of animosity toward Denmark. The fact is that the relationship between the two nations had in recent years been growing constantly better and more sympathetic.

But let us return to the national celebration at Thingvellir on June 17, where the impressive scenic surrounding formed a glorious background for the historic event taking place there that day. The ceremonies were simple but inspiring, marked by dignity and hopeful joy, befitting a nation with as time-honored democratic traditions as is the case of the Icelandic people, for theirs is the oldest functioning parliament in the world.

The festivities began with a beautiful religious service, conducted by Bishop Sigurgeir Sigurdsson of the national Lutheran Church. There followed indeed a solemn and unforgettable moment, when the President of the Althing, Mr. Gisli Sveinsson, declared that the Republic was proclaimed. Thereupon church bells throughout the country chimed for two minutes. They heralded a new era in the history of Iceland. The dream of a reborn republic, which the Icelanders had cherished in their hearts, generation after generation, had at last become a reality. It was an occasion of national rejoicing. Nothing reveals the mood and the spirit of the people better than the fact that, although the weather at Thingvellir was very unfavorable the whole day, no one was heard to complain, and some 25,000, or one-fifth of the population, was assembled there.

The first act of the Althing, after the proclamation of the Republic, was the election of its first President, who in the future will be elected by the people. Hon. Sveinn Bjornsson, who since 1941 had been Regent of Iceland and for years previous to that its minister in Copenhagen, was elected, and received a great ovation.

Then came another high point in the epoch-making events of the day: greetings to the new Republic from special representatives of the United States, Great Britain, Norway, Sweden and the Provisional Government of the French Republic, each of whom paid glowing tribute to the Icelandic people on behalf of his government and nation. Their messages were received in the same hearty spirit. The representatives of Norway and Sweden made a particularly favorable impression by delivering their greetings in the Icelandic language. A representative of Soviet Russia also was present at the celebration.

Unfortunately, Denmark's longtime minister to Iceland, Dr. F. le Sage de Fontenay, could not be present, as he was detained in England because of war restrictions, but he sent a much appreciated message of congratulations.

And then came one of the greatest moments of the day.

Prime Minister, Dr. Bjorn Thordarson read in the course of the afternoon a telegram from King Christian X, in which the highly esteemed and heroic King sent his greetings to the Icelandic people and extended his best wishes to the new Republic. The King's greetings were received with tremendous enthusiasm, and following the ovation in his honor, the band played and the people joined in the Danish royal anthem. The good will and the sympathy of the Icelanders towards the King and the Danish people revealed itself on this memorable occasion in an unmistakable and beautiful manner.

The afternoon's program consisted of a national celebration of addresses, recitations, vocal and instrumental music,

and sports. Thingvellir, the sacred place of the Icelanders, was again for a while, as in the days of old, the gathering place and the centre of the whole nation and the national life. In those unique natural surroundings, so uncommonly rich in historic traditions, the past and the present clasped hands in that momentous event.

The following day, June 18, the festivities continued at Reykjavik, among other things with the greatest procession seen in the history of the city and the country, led by thousands of Icelandic children carrying Icelandic flags. President Björnsson delivered an address to the nation, followed by shorter addresses by the leaders of the political parties. The re-establishment of the Republic was also commemorated with fitting celebrations throughout the country, which were everywhere attended by large numbers of people.

As was to be expected this historic event also attracted world-wide attention. It was an eloquent reminder of the fact that the small Icelandic nation—numbering only some 125,000 people—has a venerable history and a notable record of achievement, not only, as already indicated, in the realm of self-government, but no less in the realm of letters, for the Icelandic Eddas and Sagas have an honorable place among the world's classics.

Iceland is not, so to speak, merely a curiosity shop from a historical point of view, a museum preserving the dead past. It is in very many respects a thoroughly modern country, the home of a progressive nation, busily and courageously working out its destiny. Parallel with the political advancement since Iceland won its constitutional freedom in 1874 there has been a steady progress in every field of activity. Since the turn of the century a new Iceland has been emerging.

The writer was particularly gratified to note the great material progress which has taken place in Iceland during the

past two or three decades, even since he last visited the country in 1930. With every year the Icelanders are making fuller use of their tremendous natural resources, such as their abundant water falls, rivers and hot springs.

Reykjavik, the capital, a modern city of over 40,000 people, is lighted by electricity produced by water power in the vicinity, and already is very largely heated by the water from hot springs located nearby.

An increasing number of green-houses have been built in recent years, heated from hot springs, where quantities of tomatoes and other vegetables are grown, as well as grapes and bananas. New developments have also taken place in the industrial fields.

The progressive spirit of the Icelandic people also expresses itself in other fields. The cultural advancement of the nation can be seen in many ways in the social realm, not least in the field of education.

Iceland has an excellent national university and an equally excellent school system. It is noteworthy that in proportion to the population, the Icelanders annually publish more books than any other nation. Literature flourishes abundantly in the land of the old sagas, and much important work is being done in the realm of Icelandic art.

Bravely facing the future, the Icelandic people have now taken the last step in their long struggle for regained freedom. This does not, however, mean a change in their attitude toward the other nations of the North, their kinsmen by blood and traditions. As emphasized by President Sveinn Björnsson in a recent radio address from New York to the Scandinavian countries, the Icelanders continue to harbor the same feelings as before toward the sister nations of the North and sincerely look forward to the resumption of cooperation with them when the war is won. So also do they look forward to continue friendly relations with the other nations of the world.

C. H. Thordarson



Mr. C. H. Thordarson, who passed away in Chicago on February 6th, 1945, had the distinction of achieving the position of one of the most famous men of his time.

From a lonely cottage in the pastoral countryside in Iceland he secured a prominent place in the scientific and industrial life of the United States. When living in the solitary cottage, the boy was remarkable for a curiosity to understand the events in the world about him. "What," he asked, "caused the northern lights"? This inquisitive mood was the key to his unique experiences.

Mr. Thordarson was born at Stað in Hrutafjörð on May 12, 1867 and left Iceland for the States when five years old. He is not the product of the schools, since he received very little formal education. However, before he was eight, he attended school for two sessions; yet behind him was the literate tradition of his people and that valuable thing, a small home library, which, when he achieved affluence, he extended into the most valuable and unique private collection of scientific and academic books in the United States.

The first small library was a tool, whose value lay not in what he had but in what he did with it: not in possession but in use. He first lived in Dane County, near Milwaukee, Wisconsin where farming is difficult. It was decided to move to North Dakota, where land was cheap and rich in quality. The women and children went by railway; the men drove the wagons. Our "man" was now thirteen years old; the trek took sixty days, spent mostly in walking. The new home was forty miles from the railroad and young Thordarson did not see a train for five years. He took his talent of enquiry with him, of course, for his mood was one of constant curiosity and ques-

tioning. In the home library was a book on physics bound in blue paper, entitled "the Blue Book." In it he slaked his avid thirst for knowledge and thus spent the long winters in private study, when true assimilation takes place. This is not the first time in history that a small home library has had important influence in the life of a significant person. He had a natural bent for physics and so learned the "blue book" almost by heart. The mind is like the body in this respect, it is not the store of provision but the amount digested which nourishes. From the "blue book" our young friend learned the definition of a scientific experiment, which, even late in life he thought of value: the process is one of asking nature a question; if the answer be unsatisfactory, it is because we did not know how to ask it. We constantly repeat the question until a satisfactory reply is received. This of course, is the essence of the scientific method.

On this sound basis our young adventurer in the alluring land of knowledge made a decision to become a scientist. He was fascinated by electricity.

When eighteen years old he was able to go to live in Chicago, where he started school with a handicap of language, for he had lived among Icelanders up to that time. He was placed in grade four with youngsters of ten and naturally felt some discomfort. However, he passed two grades a year and after two years went to work: behind in education but compensated by natural ability and some budding advantages of character i.e. the total qualities of the personality. The first job he took was with a friend in an electric works—twenty years of age, little formal education, four dollars a week: not very promising if you leave out the undeveloped factors of the character. How did he manage on the money? Famous-

ly, though frugally, by learning to go without a multitude of useless things with which the modern world abounds. He even spent a precious dollar out of the four on books to feed his eager, enquiring mind. We now discover a

experience in motors and dynamos. He was still devoted to and fascinated by the magic mistress, Electricity. He now did a great deal of general scientific reading, evidently feeling the need of a broad background, and in this way



C. H. THORDARSON

revelation of the principles of his character; sincerity, intelligence, perseverance, frugality; qualities which will carry a young man a long way if used with discretion. At this point he moved to St. Louis where he was able to indulge a cherished desire to gain

came to a realization of how little he knew—a most valuable asset for one determined to climb the austere heights of wisdom. With this realization he attained a proper humility. We are reminded that when Socrates told the Delphic Oracle that he knew nothing,

the Oracle replied that he was still the wisest man in the world.

Thordarson decided to apply himself more closely to study to make up for the deficiency. At this point he illustrates the vagaries of genius by investing his total savings in a ten thousand mile trip to Mexico City and San Francisco. He lavished the considerable sum of twenty-five dollars in each place as his donation for experiences gained. In return, he got a wealth of ideas and breadth of view. It proved a pregnant trip.

On his return to Chicago, feeling like Ulysses a "travelled and experienced" man he took his last position working for someone else at the age of twenty-seven, he embarked on the perilous billows of business with a capital of seventy-five dollars. He succeeded; but difficulties for such a soul are the stuff of life. He proved the truth of Shakespeare's phrase:

"Sweet are the uses of adversity."

Neither scientific experiment, business process, life, nor German staff strategy altogether "succeed according to plan;" discretion in adaptation is always necessary.

From such small beginnings, without ever selling stock he now has a turnover of many millions. His secret is careful economy, hard work and doing the right thing by all—otherwise known as the Golden Rule. By way of illustration, he set up in opposition to the powerful Edison Company, his former employers in the same line and the same building. They gave him permission to order supplies on their account, which was a mark of great confidence based on his honorable conduct as an employee. The credit thus gained was very valuable: it helped out his initial "heavy" capital fund of seventy-five dollars! Because of this token of trust, other big companies also offered to trust him. This enlarged the potential of his activities.

He worked for the Chicago Telephone Company and inevitably learned some

of their secrets. Though sometimes tempted by outsiders to divulge their plans, he was most careful to co-operate with his customers by remaining loyal, by "doing the right thing." Shakespeare again:

"To thine own self be true."

The Telephone Company itself, through its agents, tested him and finding him entirely dependable reciprocated by sending him some big business. This condition came to an end when the affairs of the Telephone Company were re-arranged, but Thordarson entered upon new and larger fields. Milton:

"To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new."

He invented and built electrical apparatus, specialized in University research work. In this way he met the big physicists, and to use his own revealing phrase "my education really began." He built a million volt transformer for exhibit at the St. Louis World Fair in 1904. In this work his prudence and perseverance brought success. He was awarded a gold medal, and a second one followed at the Panama-Pacific Exposition. Mr. Thordarson has also been awarded the doctor's degree by the University of Wisconsin and the University of Iceland and decorated with the Order of the Falcon by the Government of Iceland. In his research work the object was to send high voltage currents over long distances. As the inventor sagely remarks, they were "asking Nature more questions." In the course of his career he has received and interpreted many significant replies.

One valuable field of electrical experiment treats of the precipitation of noxious gases in manufacture, a matter of importance to the well-being of vegetation and man in many communities. The products obtained by the process are now marketed—thus bringing a double benefit.

C. H. Thordarson before his decease occupied an honored place in science and industry because he acquired the

habit of learning from everyone and every event. He was an outstanding instance of the universal process: the expansion of consciousness, and especi-

ally of moral consciousness, without which, as we see in current history, even science itself can be used most harmfully.
—E. C.



Guttormur J. Guttormsson



Among Icelandic-Canadian writers Guttormur J. Guttormsson occupies both a very prominent and in many respects a unique position. He has the distinction of being the only important Icelandic poet on this continent—writing in the Icelandic language—who is born on North American soil. The son of Icelandic pioneers, he was born December

several years tried his hand at many things he succeeded in 1910 in buying his parental farm at Riverton, where he has lived ever since. He has, therefore, had to wrest his living from the soil to provide for a large family, but he has had a splendid and worthy help-mate in Jensína Danielsdóttir, whom he married during his early years at Shoal Lake, Manitoba.



GUTTORMUR J. GUTTORMSSON

15, 1878, at Icelandic River now Riverton, Manitoba, and grew up in that frontier community.

Orphaned at the age of sixteen, he was thrown on his own, and his schooling having of necessity been very limited, he was compelled to earn his living by manual labor. After having for

Guttormsson's achievements in the realm of letters are particularly remarkable in the light of the conditions under which he has had to do his literary work. No doubt those circumstances have in a degree thwarted his intellectual development at the same time as they have been a challenge to him. He has published four collections of poetry as well as a volume of ten one-act plays. These books amply reveal his rich and original poetic gift and vigorous intellect, and they have deservedly been reviewed favorably by Icelandic critics on both sides of the Atlantic.

Guttormsson has made up for his lack of formal schooling with extensive reading. He is not only steeped in the time-honored Icelandic literary tradition, but likewise widely read in European and American literature, and a thoroughly modern poet in his outlook upon life and his approach to his themes.

He possesses great mastery of the Icelandic tongue; in his hands it is a many-stringed and responsive instrument. His facility in handling traditional Icelandic verse forms is also note-

worthy, although he frequently follows his own path in that respect.

An Icelander by racial origin and cultural background, Guttormsson is no less a genuine Canadian. This fact is written large in his poetry. He is as conscious of his obligation to the land of his birth as he is of his debt to the country of his fathers. He has interpreted the life of Icelandic pioneers in Manitoba in poems noted for their graphic description, deep insight, and sympathy. Nowhere has he, however, erected the pioneers a more lasting literary monument than in his stirring poem "Sandy Bar," where penetrating thought, understanding, and mastery of form go hand in hand.

Many of Guttormsson's most significant and most original poems, such as "The Care of the Bees" (Byflugnaræk-tin), are based directly on his personal experience. Here, as Professor Watson Kirkconnell has effectively put it, the poet "uses a familiar episode of bee-keeping to adumbrate the spiritual tragedy of his own life" (Canadian Over-tones). Through his penetrating portrayal, this tragic experience of his takes on a universal application. Thus it is ever with the true poet; it transmutes into the gold of poetry and universal truth what to the rest of men appears but an uninteresting and insignificant everyday occurrence. This strikingly original and effective poem is representative of the symbolic quality of Guttormsson's poems, which has been an increasingly fundamental element in his works.

His poetry is also rich in original and colorful nature descriptions, where striking similes are a characteristic element. Elsewhere in such poems of his the

lyric quality and the light touch are the outstanding feature. A deep sympathy with the step-children of life, the under-dog, is also a strong under-current in his poetry.

Further, Guttormsson is a humorist, or rather a satirist, of no mean ability. His epigrams and longer satires, directed at hypocrisy and superficiality, frequently hit the mark squarely. In his effective use of the epigram as a vehicle for his satirical barbs he carries on brilliantly a very old tradition in Icelandic poetry.

Not only has Guttormsson made a lasting name for himself in the realm of Icelandic poetry; his one-act dramas are also a significant contribution to Icelandic literature. They are profound in thought and often remarkably distinctive in theme and dramatic method. Among these, "The Circle" (Hringurinn) has been highly praised by Icelandic critics for its dramatic excellence and its concentration. These symbolic and expressionistic one-act plays of Guttormsson's were written simultaneously or even before the emergence of the Expressionistic School of drama in continental Europe.

Professor Kirkconnell concludes the introductory essay to his book **Canadian Overtones** with these words:

"It is the glory of the Icelandic settlers that in their first generation among us they have created a poetry, based on Canada and their experiences of it, that is worthy of challenging comparison with the best that three centuries have produced in their foster-country."

Guttormur J. Guttormsson, the poet-farmer of Riverton, Manitoba, has a large share in that achievement.

RICHARD BECK



Farewell to Eggert Stefansson

★



One of the simplest and yet most pleasing and inspiring functions which it has been my privilege to attend for many a day took place at the First Lutheran Church in Winnipeg on Sunday Jan. 21, last. It was the occasion of a farewell to Eggert Stefansson, the noted singer from Iceland, sponsored by the Icelandic Canadian Club. This was not a banquet or a celebration—merely a simple saying good-bye to one of our kith and kin, a man gifted in his art, intensely patriotic and with an understanding of us who have so much in common with him. A meeting in one of the churches, after a service, created a friendly, homish feeling, yes, a spiritual concord which could be felt in the very atmosphere of the gathering. A joint choir, addresses by the two ministers, the presidents of the National League and the Icelandic Canadian Club sharing honors in delivering the main speech of farewell and chairing the meeting, the customary original poem in Icelandic—it all combined to make the

event uniquely pleasant and harmonious.

The formal, but yet very informal part of the farewell was followed by light refreshments served free of charge. This provided an opportunity to all present not to only shake hands with the guest but to visit one another. Gatherings of this type, free and open to all, where there is such oneness of feeling, are altogether too few. It may be that here we have found the happiest method of welcoming and bidding good-bye to guests whom we want to feel at home with us.

In responding Eggert Stefansson spoke of his abiding love of the land where he was born and spent the impressionable years of his life. Though oftentimes in distant lands his feeling for Iceland became the more deep-rooted with the passing of the years and each return was awaited with impatient expectancy.

It was in his concluding remarks where Mr. Stefansson reached the innermost depths of our hearts. He had come to Canada to see his brother Gudmundur, whose son, named after his uncle, was killed in action in the present world struggle. He craved for an opportunity to be with his brother and for a while share the great loss with him. Eggert then passed on to the wider field of sacrifice and spoke of the many brave young men of our blood who have fallen and are falling in this terrible cataclysm. The deep emotion and intense feeling in voice and manner touched every one present. He became one of us, sharing a common loss. In his concluding words, which were as a prayer to God, he expressed the fervent hope that it would not be in vain and that the victory, won through their sacrifice would lead to permanent peace. In the audience there was breathless silence.

—W. J. L.

OUR WAR EFFORT



Lt.-Nursing Sister OLIVIA H. JOHNSON

Born at Lonely Lake, Man. Enlisted in R.C.A.M.C. May 1944. Embarked for overseas in Oct. 1944 and is now stationed in England. Daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Einar Johnson, Steep Rock, Man.



F.-L. JOHN K. GUTTORMSON — Born May 21, 1920 in Winnipeg, Man. Enlisted Sept. 1941 in R.C.A.F. Trained at Brandon, Winnipeg, McDonald, Man. and Saskatoon, Sask., and graduated with a commission in Aug. 1942. Was on Coastal command at Summerside, P.E.I., Patricia Bay, B. C., and Yarmouth, N.S. Went overseas May 1944 and is now stationed in Iceland. Son of Mr. & Mrs. B. Guttormson, Winnipeg.

CAPT. ARNI L. SUMARLIDSON, D.F.C.

Born in Seattle, Wash., Dec. 1, 1918. Enlisted Feb. 1942 in the A.A.F., winning his wings as a pilot in Nove. 1942. He spent 9 months in the European theatre of war as a co-pilot and later pilot of three different Flying Fortresses. He was awarded the D.F.C. Air Medal and Oak Leaf Cluster, upon completing twenty-five operational flights. Arrived in the U. S. A. in November 1943. He took further training at San Francisco and served as flying instructor in Mississippi and is now stationed in Washington D. C. He is the son of Mr. & Mrs. Arni Sumarlidason, now of Arizona.



CAPT. E. H. PALMASON—Mentioned in dispatches and gallantry and distinguished service in the field, according to a press release from Ottawa. He graduated in Engineering from the University of Manitoba in 1936, and prior to his enlistment was the efficiency expert for Procter and Gamble in Hamilton, Ont. Son of Mr. & Mrs. H. J. H. Palmason, Winnipeg, Man.



Pte. J. Trausti Lindal



Sigm. I. J. Lindal

PTE. J. TRAUSTI LINDAL—Born Lundar, Man., July 7, 1919. Enlisted in R.C.A.S.C. July 1940. Went overseas July 1940. Served as ambulance driver in England during the winter of 1940-41. Trained in Scotland, Went to Sicily and is now in Italy.

SIGM. I. J. LINDAL—Born Oct. 1915 at Lundar, Man. Enlisted April 1942 in R.C.C.S. Trained at Portage La Prairie, Man., and Kingston, Ont. Embarked for overseas in Dec. 1943. Now serving in Holland.

SONS OF MR. & MRS. D. J. LINDAL, LUNDAR, MAN.



BARNEY E. EMILSON—Born Aug. 1922 in Iceland. Enlisted Sept. 1942 in the R.C.A. Went overseas March 1943. Went to North Africa, then to Italy in Nov. 1943. Wounded Sept. 1944. Son of Mr. & Mrs. Gisli Emilson, Hayland, Man.



SGT. CLIFFORD DENNISON—Born Mar. 1924 at Selkirk, Man. Enlisted Mar. 1943 in R.C.A.F. and is a W.A.G. Embarked for overseas in Aug. 1944. Son of Mr. & Mrs. B. Dennison, Shoal Lake, Man.



F.O. B. H. Bjarnason

P.O. ARI BERGTHOR CLARK

Born at Foam Lake, Sask., in 1917. Enlisted in the R.C.A.F. in October, 1941. He received his training at Edmonton, Saskatoon, Calgary and graduated from Macdonald, Man., as Wireless Air Gunner. He was then posted to Portage la Prairie, Man., and later received his operational training at Pat Bay, B. C. He arrived overseas in Dec. 1943. He made a hobby of building model aeroplanes and won several championships in 1931. He was employed by the W. J. Gage & Co. Ltd., prior to his enlistment. Was reported missing December 26, 1944.

Son of Mrs. C. A. Clark and the late Mr. Clark, Amaranth, Man.



Sgt. P. T. Magnusson

F.O. BRYAN HARVEY BJARNASON

Born at Bruno, Sask., April 2, 1924. He enlisted in the R.C.A.F. in December 1942. Took his training at Brandon, Edmonton, High Rivers. He graduated March 9, 1944, at Vulcan, Alta., an honor student, and is now with the R.A.F. in India.

Son of Mr. & Mrs. John H. Bjarnason,
Naicam, Sask.



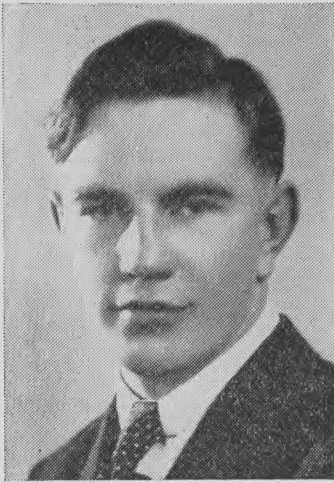
P.O. A. B. Clark



SGT. PAUL THORSTEINN MAGNUSSON

Born at Leslie, Sask., Nov. 26, 1922. He enlisted in the R.C.A.F. Aug 25, 1941, at Saskatoon. Stationed at many different points in the East while engaged in duties as a Wireless Technician. Remustered in Oct. 1943 and graduated from Mont Joli, Que., in Oct. 1944. He is now stationed at Three Rivers, Que.

Son of Mr. & Mrs. M. W. Magnusson,
Leslie, Sask.



Flt.-Sgt. W. G. Armour



Sqd.-Ldr. E. D. Armour

★

FLT.-SGT. WILTON GARNET ARMOUR—Born at Foam Lake, Sask., Oct. 30, 1922. Enlisted in R.C.A.F. July 10, 1942. Trained at Hamilton, Toronto, London. Went overseas in Sept. 1943. Accidentally killed in action Nov. 11, 1944.

SQD.-LDR. ELWOOD DONALD ARMOUR—Born at Foam Lake, Sask., Oct. 28, 1915. Enlisted in R.C.A.F. Sept. 3, 1939. Trained at Calgary and in Eastern Canada. He is now stationed at Scoudouc, N. B.

SONS OF MR. & MRS. E. G. ARMOUR, FOAM LAKE, SASK.



A.B. JOHN WILLIAM OVENSTONE—Born at Wabigon, Ont., and finished his training at Esquimalt in Sept. 1942. He returned home on leave in Oct. 1944, after being overseas since Aug. 1943.



Qm. 2/C LEO THORSTEINN THORLAKSON—Born at Leslie, Sask., March 19, 1924. Enlisted June 22, 1943. Trained at U.S.N.T.S., Great Lakes, Ill., and Norfolk, Va. Now serving on U.S.S. Chas. J. Kimmel. Son of Mr. & Mrs. Daniel A. Tholakson, Detroit, Mich.

★



L.-Cpl. Allan W. Davidson

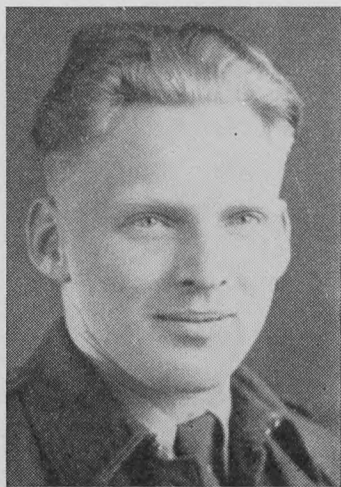
L.-CPL. ALLAN W. DAVIDSON—Born at Oak Lake, Man., Aug. 15, 1922. Enlisted with Q.O.C.H of Canada Sept. 1942. Went overseas May 1943. Wounded in France Aug. 8, 1944. Now stationed in England.

SGT. DAVID G. DAVIDSON—Born at Baldur, Man., Nov. 1, 1910. Enlisted in R.C.A.F. Nov. 16, 1940. Went overseas Jan. 1941. Served with the R.A.F. in England and the Faroe Islands as Radio Technician. Returned home in Nov. 1944, and is now serving in Winnipeg, Man.

**SONS OF MR. & MRS. HJÖRTUR DAVIDSON OF SOURIS, MAN.,
FORMERLY OF BALDUR, MAN.**



Sgt. David G. Davidson



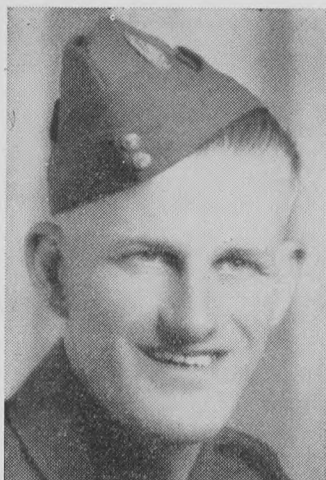
SIGMN. HALLDOR M. GUDMUNDSON—

Born Oct. 29, 1920 at Mozart, Sask. Enlisted in March 1942. Has served in England, France, Belgium and Holland. Son of Mr. and Mrs. Finnbogi Gudmundson of Mozart, Sask., formerly of Akra, N. D.



FLT.-SGT. A. S. OLAFSON—

Born at Tantallon, Sask., Feb. 9, 1924. Enlisted in the R.C.A.F. in Feb. 1943. Went overseas in May 1944, is now in England. Son of Mr. and Mrs. Ole Olafson, Winnipeg, Man.

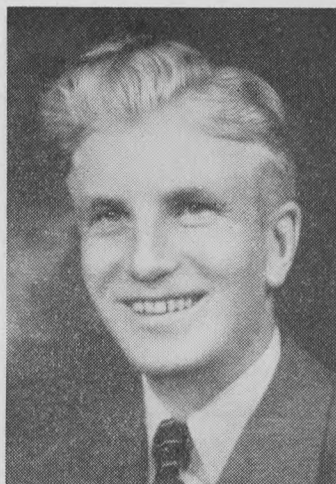


Spr. Einar Bjarnason

SPR. EINAR BJARNASON—Born May 7, 1912 in Selkirk, Man. Enlisted in the Royal Canadian Engineers in Feb. 1941. Trained in Dundurn, Chilliwack and Debert. Embarked for overseas in Feb. 1942. Went to France shortly after "D" Day, and is now in Belgium.

SPR. AUÐUN OLAFUR BJARNASON—Born Oct. 12, 1914 in Riverton, Man. Enlisted in R.C.E. in July 1942. Trained in Ft. Garry, Chilliwack and Calgary. Embarked for overseas in Feb. 1944. Went to France right after "D" Day, then to Belgium and is now in Holland.

**SONS OF MR. ASGEIR BJARNASON AND THE LATE MRS. BJARNASON
OF SELKIRK, MANITOBA**



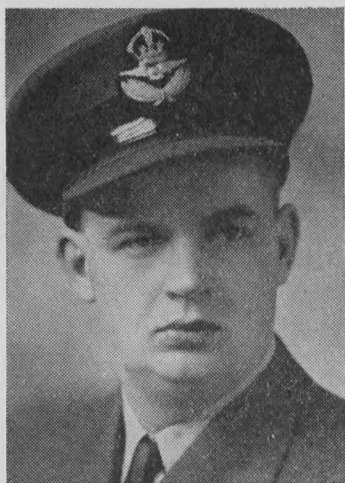
Spr. Auðun Olafur Bjarnason



L.A.C. HERMAN EYFORD—Born at Gimli, Man., Mar. 18, 1916. Enlisted in Royal Canadian Air Force, April 1942. Went overseas in Sept 1943 and is now in Egypt. Son of Mr. & Mrs. S. Eyford, formerly of Oak Point, Man., now at Vancouver, B. C.



Seaman IC LEIGHTON HARTLEY LONG coastguardsman. Son of Freda Stefansson Long and Hartley Long, formerly of Winnipeg. Born at Vancouver and moved to Seattle in 1923. Enlisted Sept. 11, 1941, now stationed in Boston, Mass.



Flt.-Lt. M. J. Johnson

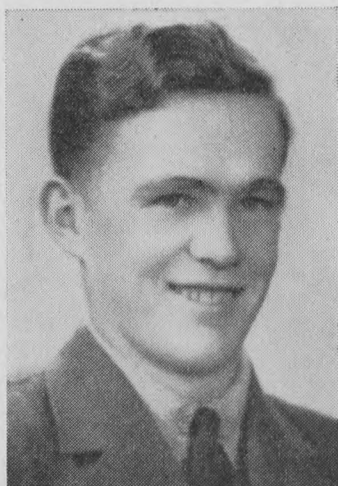


A.C.I E. S. Isford

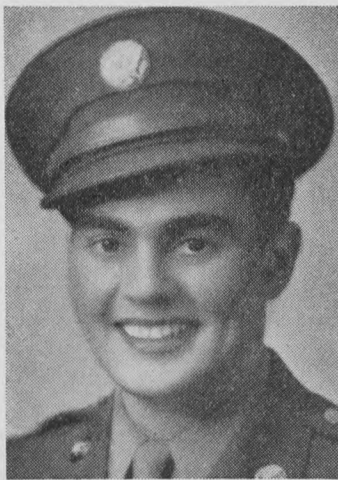
FLT.-LT. MAGNUS JONAS JOHNSON—Born at Baldur, Man., Dec. 19, 1920. Joined R.C.A.F. Sept. 1941. Graduated as Air Bomber at Winnipeg in Nov. 1942. Went overseas in Dec. 1942. Awarded D.F.C. in Sept. 1944. Citation reads: "This officer has completed many successful operations during which he has displayed high skill, fortitude and devotion to duty."

A.C.I EINAR SÆMUNDUR ISFORD—Born in Winnipeg Aug. 14, 1921 and lived with Mr. & Mrs. Johnson since 1929. Joined the R.C.A.F. in May 1943. After completing his training was posted to Brandon and then overseas in July 1944.

SON AND FOSTER-SON OF MR. & MRS. TRYGGVI JOHNSON, BALDUR, MAN.



ANDRES ANDERSON—Born March 1922 at Baldur, Man. Enlisted Nov. 1940 in R.C.A.F. Went overseas in Feb. 1942. Now serving in France. Son of Mr. & Mrs. S. A. Anderson, Baldur, Man.



STEFAN ARNI SCHEVING—Born June 21, 1924 at Hensel, N. D. Entered the service (Army) Sept. 1943. Went overseas in March 1944. Now in Belgium with the Quartermaster Corps.



Pte. P. H. A. N. Westdal L.-Cpl. S. N. H. Westdal

F.O. B. J. E. Westdal

PTE. P. HAROLD A. N. WESTDAL—Born Nov. 5, 1921 at Wynyard, Sask. Enlisted in June 1944. Has since been discharged.

L.-CPL. SWAIN NIELSON HALLGRIMUR WESTDAL—Born in Winnipeg, Man., Apr. 5, 1918. Enlisted in Can. Provost Corps in May 1942. Now serving in England.

F.O. BJORGVIN JON (JACK) EINAR WESTDAL—Born at Wynyard, Sask., March 6, 1917. Enlisted in the R.C.A.F. in May 1942. Comissioned on graduation. Now stationed at Aliford Bay, B. C., on Coastal Patrol Duty.

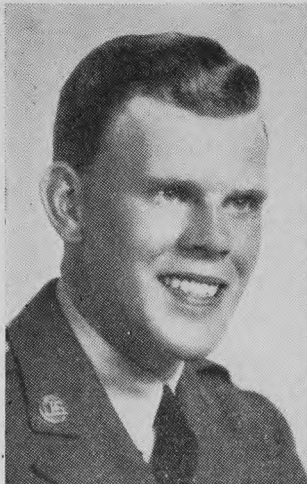
SONS OF MR. & MRS. PAUL J. WESTDAL, WINNIPEG, MAN.



SGT. RALPH ARNI ALFRED—Born April 26, 1924 at Chicago, Ill. Enlisted in U.S. Marine Corp in March 1943. Embarked for South Pacific in Nov. 1943. Now serving on Marshall Islands. Son of Mr. & Mrs. Olafur R. Alfred of Chicago.



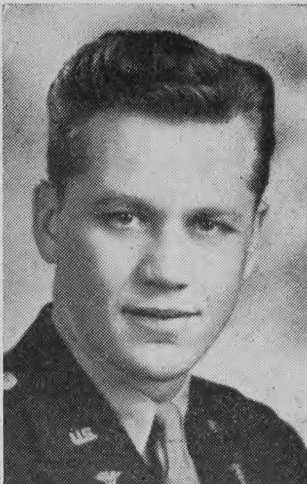
JAMES JACOB WALKER—Born July 31, 1922. Joined the army in Nov. 1942. Sent overseas in Nov. 1943. Now stationed in Holland. Son of Mr. & Mrs. J. Walker. Mrs. Walker was formerly Salome Henrikson.



Lieut. E. V. Freeman



Jon Willard Freeman



Capt. D. W. Freeman

LIEUT. ERLING V. FREEMAN—Born at Upham, N. D., Aug. 22, 1919. Enlisted in the service in July 1941. Entered Officers Training School at Fort Sill, Okla., and graduated as 2nd Lieut., since promoted to 1st Lieut. Now in South Pacific.

JON WILLARD FREEMAN—Born at Upham, N. D., May 7, 1911. Enlisted in the Ski Troops Feb. 1943. Trained at Camp Hale, Col. Received medical discharge and is now in gov. service with office and headquarters in Redwood Falls, Minn.

CAPT. DONALD W. FREEMAN, M.D.—Born at Upham, N. D., April 6, 1917. Entered the service in July 1942. Went to West Indies. Promoted to Captain in May 1943. Now at Drew Field Hospital in Florida.

SONS OF MR. & MRS O. S. FREEMAN, BOTTINEAU, N. DAK.



Capt. A. O. (Bud) Thorwaldson

In Memoriam

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CAPT. ALBERT O. (BUD) THORWALDSON

Born March 2, 1918 at Akra, N. Dak. Was civilian instructor at Mather Field, Santa Ana, Calif., Army Pre-Glider School at Monticello, Minn., flight instructor at Alexandria, Minn., and Visalia, Calif. Joined the China National Aviation Corp as a pilot and went overseas Sept. 1944. Made several trips over "the hump". Was killed in a plane crash in Burma Jan. 14, 1945.

Son of Mr. & Mrs. Bjorn S. Thorwaldson, formerly of Akra, N. D., now of Huntington Park, Calif., U.S.A.



Capt. B. Valdimar Bjarnason



P.O. Arlan Emmet Bjarnason

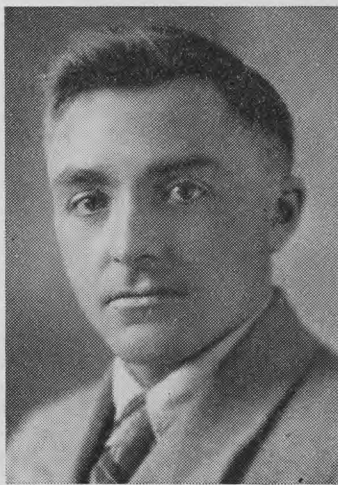
CAPT. B. VALDIMAR BJARNASON—Born March 15, 1917 at Wynyard, Sask. Enlisted in Armoured Corps in Aug. 1942. Went overseas in Sept. 1943. Now in Holland.

P.O. ARLAN EMMET BJARNASON—Born July 22, 1921 at Wynyard, Sask. Enlisted in R.C.A.F. in May 1942. Went overseas in March 1943. Completed tour of operations in July 1944. Returned to Canada Nov. 1944. Now with Western Air Com.

SONS OF MR. & MRS. PAUL BJARNASON OF VANCOUVER, B. C.



L.A.C. EYOLFUR S. GUNNARSON—Born at Bredenbury, Sask., Jan. 17, 1917. Enlisted in R.C.A.F. and went overseas in March 1944. Was seriously burnt, now in hospital in England. Son of Eyolfur & Sigridur Gunnarson, formerly of Bredenbury, now Campbell River, B.C.



L.-BDR. O. THORSTEINSON—Enlisted with the 17th Field Regiment in 1940, went overseas Oct. 1941. Next of kin, Mrs. Gudrun Thorsteinson, Winnipeg, Man. Another son, Pte. K. Thorsteinson is with the Veterans Guard of Canada.



T4 Torfi Gudbjartson



P.F.C. Hinrik Gudbjartson

T4 TORFI GUDEBJARTSON—Born June 17, 1922 at Winnipeg, Man. Enlisted Dec. 1942 in Armored Engineers, 20th Tank Div. Trained at Camp Campbell and is now stationed in Kentucky.

P.F.C. HINRIK GUDEBJARTSON—Born Oct. 7, 1925 at Akra, N. D. Enlisted Feb. 1944. Trained in Infantry Bn. Now stationed in Florida.

SONS OF MR. & MRS. DAGBJARTUR GUDEBJARTSON, AKRA, N. DAK.



Pte. Erling M. Erlendson



2nd Lt. Olivia G. Erlendson

PTE. ERLING M. ERLENDSON—Born Oct. 1921 at Hensel, N. Dak. Enlisted 1942 in U.S. Army Air Corps. Now stationed at Mercea Army Air Field, Mercea, Calif.

2nd LT. OLIVIA G. ERLENDSON—Born Aug. 1920 at Hensel, N. Dak. Enlisted Aug. 1943 in the U. S. Army Air Corps, Nurses Corps. Stationed at Great Falls, Mont.

**SON AND DAUGHTER OF MRS. KRISTINE & THE LATE MR. ERLENDSON
LONG BEACH, CALIF. (FORMERLY OF HENSEL, N. DAK.)**

Prisoners of War

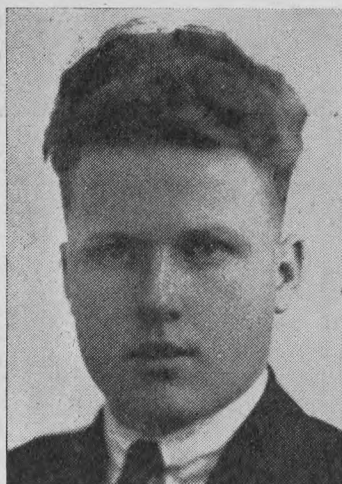
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W.O. ARTHUR PAUL ANDERSON

Enlisted July 1941, in the R.C.A.F. Graduated as an Observer in Sept. 1942. Went overseas in March 1943 and was listed missing in Sept. 1944 and later reported prisoner of War in Germany in Nov. 1944. Formerly employed with the Viking Press Ltd., Winnipeg. Son of the late Mrs. Jóhanna Anderson.



W.O. Arthur P. Anderson



Pte. Edward G. Peterson

PTE. EDWARD GEORG PETERSON

Born March 21, 1903. He enlisted early in September 1939, with the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders. He went to England in the spring of 1941. Took part in the raid at Dieppe on August 19, 1942, and was wounded and is now a prisoner in Germany.

Son of Mr. & Mrs. Magnus Peterson of Norwood, Man.

PTE. KJARTAN JOHNSON

★

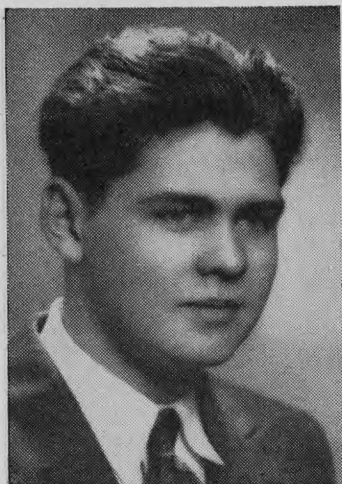
Born at Mountain, N. D. Enlisted in the Royal Canadian Artillery, April, 1943. Went overseas in December 1944, and was transferred to the R.C.A.M.C. Is now serving in Belgium.

Son of the late Ólafur and Ragnheiður Johnson, formerly of Arborg, Man.



Pte. Kjartan Johnson

★



A.C. E. R. Eirikson

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L.A.C. O. R. Eirikson

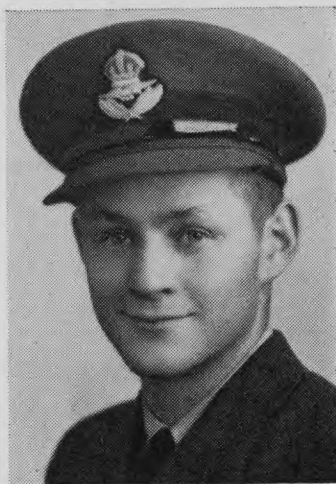
A.C. EIRIKUR RONALD EIRIKSON—Born at Arnes, Man., Nov. 21, 1925. Joined the R.C.A.F. in April 1944. At present in Vancouver, B. C.

L.A.C. OSKAR RALPH EIRIKSON—Born at Arnes, Man., Jan. 2, 1922. Joined the R.C.A.F. in 1942. Now stationed at Boundary Bay, B. C.

SONS OF MR. & MRS. OSKAR EIRIKSON, ARNES, MAN.



F.O. STEPHAN G. HORDAL—Born 1921 at Foam Lake, Sask. Enlisted Feb. 1941 in R.C.A.F. Trained in Brandon, Dafoe, Edmonton, High River and Macleod, where he received his wings. He has completed a tour of operation over enemy territory, and was awarded the D.F.C. Son of Mr. & Mrs. E. Hordal, Wynyard, Sask.



F.O. ARNI OLAFSON—Born April 23, 1923 at Brown, Man. Enlisted Sept. 1942. Trained at Brandon, took his I.T.S. at Saskatoon, E.F.T.S. at Davidson, Sask. Completed his course at Souris with a commission. Is now stationed at B. & G. school at Dafoe, Sask., staff pilot. Son of the late Mr. & Mrs. Arni Olafson of Brown, Man.

Some Facts About Nina Saemundsson

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Nina Sæmundsson was born in the southern part of Iceland, in Fljótshlíð. Her father, Sæmundur Gudmundsson had a large farm there. He and his wife, Thorunn Gunnlaugsdottir, also had a large family, fifteen boys and girls, of which Nina is the youngest.

She lived there until she was fifteen, studying with the tutor who came to the farm, and helping with the farm work, especially with the cattle. She was very fond of taking the sheep to pasture, and in the long summer evenings when it stays light almost all night she often spent nearly the whole night watching the flocks.

When she was fifteen Nina went to Copenhagen to live with an aunt, Miss Helga Gudmundsson. There she studied for the Royal Academy of Beaux Artes, became enrolled, and graduated with honors. While a student she exhibited some of her work at the Charlottenburg Museum. She also was commissioned to make several portraits while still a student at the Academy, and the first life-size figure she completed, "Sleeping Boy", was bought by the Icelandic Government.

After graduating she went to Italy and studied in Rome and other cities for a whole year, spending much time at the famous museums. She took a trip to Tunis, where she found many interesting types among the Arabs. A statue she made later on based on her sketches was purchased by the Icelandic Government.

The following year Nina went to Paris, where she continued her studies, and here she made the statue "Mother and Child" which brought her so much acclaim. It was exhibited at the Grand Palais, of which she was made a member, and later bought by the Icelandic Government. It stands in the Children's Park in Reykjavik.

After a visit to Copenhagen, Nina decided to go to America. She had

several one-man shows in New York City, where she lived for some years, and made many busts of notable people among them Fannie Hurst, Eva LeGallienne, Greta Nissen, and Vilhjalmur Stefansson. This last was given by the Danish colony in New York to the government of Iceland in 1930, when the Icelandic nation celebrated the 1000th anniversary of its parliament.

Nina's next big commission was the statue for the entrance of the Waldorf-



Nina Saemundsson and her latest work.

Astoria hotel. This statue, called "Spirit of Achievement," which she won in competition with many other artists, has become very famous and is reproduced in advertising for the hotel and on its programs, and is well-known as a "trademark" of the hotel.

Nina came to California some years ago and since living here has made two statues which are in public parks: "Prometheus" in Westlake Park, and a heroic bust of the viking "Leif Eriksson," in Griffith Park, which was given to the city of Los Angeles by the Scandinavian Society. Nina has also made

numerous busts of prominent people, here among them Miss Clemence Dane, the English playwright and novelist, Miss Hedy Lamar, Mr. Richard Cromwell, Miss Margaret Lindsay, and many others. She has had two one-man shows of her work in local galleries, and many pieces in the Los Angeles Museum.

Several years ago Nina received the order of the Icelandic Falcon, a very high honor, which was conferred upon

her by the government of Iceland and King Christian of Denmark.

Nina works in many mediums: marble, wood, stone, and terra cotta. Lately she has been experimenting with various ceramic clays, has her own kiln and fires her own pieces. Her studio in Hollywood is a busy place, as she is always at work on many different things in different mediums. After the war she hopes to have a show in New York.

—P. J.



Letters to The Icelandic Canadian



Bottineau, N. D.

The Icelandic Canadian
Winnipeg, Manitoba.
Gentlemen:

I am enclosing herewith my check in the sum of \$2.25 to pay for a three year subscription to your magazine. I think that you have been very successful in your venture and that you are producing a magazine that is very worthwhile. Through it those of us who are, perhaps, more out of touch with our people than others, learn a great deal of value. We like the magazine very much and for that reason we are renewing our subscription.

With best wishes for continued success, I am,

Very truly yours,

Asmundur Benson

★ ★ ★

Van Nuys, Calif.

The Icelandic Canadian
Winnipeg, Manitoba.
Dear Sirs:

Enclosed please find Post Office Money Order for Two dollars, one dollar being a renewal of my subscription, the other one dollar being for a year's subscription to be sent to my brother, name and address as on enclosed subscription blank.

If you have a copy of the December

issue left in your files would like it sent to him, his subscription to start with that issue. However, if he already is a subscriber, please apply the one dollar on an other years subscription for myself

I enjoy the Icelandic Canadian very much as I read of, and see pictures of sons and daughters of so many people I knew when I lived back in Canada. I also enjoy the editorials and other articles and read it from cover to cover.

Wishing your publication every success in the New Year, I am,

Yours truly,

Fanny A. Wilson.

★ ★ ★

Saskatoon, Sask.

The Icelandic Canadian
Winnipeg, Manitoba.
Dear Sir:

In sending you a renewal of my subscription to the "Icelandic Canadian" I should like to take the opportunity of saying how much I enjoy reading it. I am particularly impressed by the splendid balance which the magazine maintains between the subject material relating to Canadian affairs generally and the affairs of special interest to Canadian Icelandic communities.

Wishing you every success,

Yours sincerely,
G. W. Simpson.

Mrs. C. S. Hayes



Steinun Johannesdóttir Hayes was born at Eystra-Miðfelli in Hvalfjarðarströnd, on Jan. 20, 1870, daughter of Johannes Jonsson and Ellesef Helga-dóttir. As a child she used to sit by the ocean where the waters lapped laughingly on rugged crags and dream of distant lands beyond that ocean, where she might offer warm welcoming hands to wayfarers on the cold rough road of life. She was especially attracted to music, singing and devotions of the Salvation Army. She remained in her

Their work included hospital educational and clinical-evangelistic activities.

On arrival in the field they found joy in the varied hard life and the experience of personal help from God and good men. This brought the satisfaction of a fruitfully spent life; a sense of vocation and healthy development of their human faculties.

In 1938 the Japanese invaded South China where the Hayes family lived. Dr. and Mrs. Hayes for four years remained to care for the sick and starving refugees, when they became prisoners of war. On June 29th 1942 they left Shanghai and arrived on M.S. Gripsholm in New York Aug. 27.



Mrs. C. S. HAYES

native Iceland until fourteen, when she came to Canada for three years; moved to U.S.A. at eighteen; stayed in North Dakota and Chicago, where she graduated in the theology. Later she acted as assistant minister in Indiana and served as a missionary in Oregon among the Chinese there. She went to Los Angeles and there took a medical degree, Feb. 11, 1902. A year later she married Dr. Chas. A. Hayes, who had graduated at the same college a year before. Two weeks later, the young couple left for China, where they worked as medical missionaries for forty years.

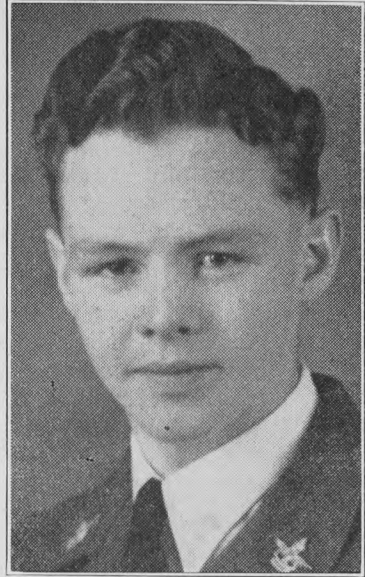
During the long years in the mission field, a period, not of exile, but rather of joyous work, Mrs. Hayes always felt the alluring call of home in Sunny California, to which she and her husband have now returned to a haven of retirement in Glendale. They had always looked forward to the exaltation of freedom from the hard grind of toil and the peace which their labors fittingly earned. This release is now happily consummated.

Mrs. Hayes has many compelling human characteristics: talent, versatility, fine memory and dauntless perseverance. She is tall, active, kindly, mellowed in the sun of experience, bright, cheerful, well-preserved, young-looking. She reminds us of the poet who sang so beautifully that he brought sunshine and joy even into the dread hall of death.

They have an only son, Professor of Chemistry of the University of North Carolina. Dr. Chas. Hayes the husband, is now a fellow of the American College of Surgeons (F.A.C.S.).

**REV. SKULI SIGURGEIRSON**

Graduated from the Lutheran College in Saskatoon in May, 1944. He was born at Big Island, Manitoba, June 12, 1897, but has lived most of his life at Gimli, Manitoba, where he will now take charge as minister of the Lutheran congregation.

**JONAS CASPER SIGURGEIRSON**

At the Commencement Exercises of United College in Nov. 1944, Jonas Casper Sigurgeirson was awarded The Logie Butchart Bursary of \$70.00, which is awarded to worthy students entering the Science Course in Grade 12. Son of Rev. Skuli Sigurgeirson and Sigridur Doll Sigurgeirson, now residing at Gimli.

**Kristjan Gunnar Anderson****KRISTJÁN GUNNAR ANDERSON**

Born August 23, 1926 at Glenboro Manitoba, son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul A. Anderson, of Glenboro, Manitoba. He graduated from the Glenboro High school in the spring of 1944. Always an ardent student of Physics and Mathematics he nevertheless paced his class in other subjects as well. His ability and scholarship was recognized by the University of Manitoba in rewarding him with a scholarship in Arts and Science, which brings with its financial aid for two consecutive years in the amount of \$325.00 per year. At present he is taking Electrical Engineering at the University of Manitoba.

LOCAL NEWS AND CLUB ACTIVITIES

Mrs. Hólmfríður Danielson was re-elected president of the Icelandic Canadian Club at the annual meeting held in the I.O.G.T. hall, January 14th. Over seventy people were present. Seven new members were welcomed to the club.

In her review of the year's work, Mrs. Danielson remarked that this had been an outstanding year in the history of Iceland, and also an outstanding year in the history of the club and that members may well take pride in the achievements accomplished in the field of culture and education.

The Icelandic Canadian Evening School, a project in adult education, inaugurated last October, has attracted wide attention, she said. This year a series of 12 lectures is being given in the First Lutheran church, on the history, culture and literature of Iceland, and 60 adults are enrolled in Icelandic language classes. The quarterly magazine reaches thousands of readers all over this continent, who are learning that in order to build for the future we must interpret and preserve the best that is to be found in the traditions of the past.

Reports showing the increasing popularity of The Icelandic Canadian magazine were given by Mrs. G. Finnbogason, war effort editor; Mrs. H. J. Lindal, news editor; Miss Grace Reykdal, business manager, and H. F. Danielson, circulation manager.

The ten issues published since the magazine was established two and a half years ago, contain among other valuable material, 16 articles on Iceland and Icelandic matters; 8 short stories by Icelandic authors; 46 pictures of outstanding students and scholarship winners; 38 pictures of outstanding citizens and 306 pictures of men and women serving in the Canadian and American War Services. A total of almost 400 pictures, which are all published at the expense of the magazine. This alone is a remarkable public service which is no doubt greatly appreciated by all our people of Icelandic descent.

Judge W. J. Lindal, chairman of the

editorial board, pointed out that the club had now established the three essential projects necessary for its proper functioning, namely: the social and community service, the magazine, and the evening school.

Other officers elected were: Past president, A. G. Eggertson, K.C.; Vice-president, W. S. Jonasson; secretary, Miss M. Halldorson; treasurer, Miss S. Eydal; members at large, Mrs. A. Blondal, Mrs. J. Thordarson, Miss S. Johnson, G. Thorlakson, H. J. Lindal, and Judge W. J. Lindal; social committee, Mrs. K. Finnson, Miss L. Thordarson, Miss A. Anderson, Mrs. E. Couch, Miss H. Eggertson, Miss S. Bjarnason, Mrs. E. Anderson and Mrs. Margaret Kirkshaw.

Elected to the magazine staff were: Chairman of the editorial board, Judge W. J. Lindal; business manager, Miss Grace Reykdal; circulation manager, Mr. H. F. Danielson; news editor, Mrs. H. J. Lindal; our war effort, Mr. G. Finnbogason. Editorial staff: Mrs. S. J. Sommerville, Mr. J. G. Johanson, Mr. B. E. Johnson and Mr. G. Eliasson.

★ ★ ★

The 26th annual convention of the Icelandic National League of America was held the 26th, 27th and 28th days of Feb.

Two "goodwill" visitors from Iceland were present: Dr. Helgi P. Briem, Icelandic consul-general in New York, and Mr. A. G. Eylands, president of the Icelandic National League in Reykjavik. Their genial and friendly participation in the convention activities gave an added zest to the proceedings.

The convention meetings were unusually well attended and an overflow crowd enjoyed the three evening concerts.

Several new and timely matters were listed on the convention Agenda, and were enthusiastically discussed by the delegates. Among them were:

The possibility of erecting a hall or community centre suitable for the varied activities of the Icelandic-Canadians here. The urgent need for action in this matter was brought to the attention of the convention in a letter sent jointly

by the Jón Sigurdson Chapter, I.O.D.E. and the Icelandic Canadian Club.

A resolution was passed recommending to the various chapters of the league the desirability of establishing cultural, educational courses based on the pattern of the Icelandic Canadian Evening School in Winnipeg.

The convention gave a standing vote of thanks to the Icelandic Canadian Club for "its trail blazing work, in the field of interpreting and preserving our Icelandic Cultural heritage, being achieved by the excellent publication, The Icelandic Canadian, and the Evening School so successfully being conducted this year."

The speaker at the Monday evening concert, sponsored by the Icelandic Canadian club, was Rev. Th. B. Sigurdson, who gave a brilliant and thoroughly delightful lecture on, "Our Contribution to Canadian Culture." In conclusion he said, "We salute the Icelandic Canadian club for having the courage and enthusiasm to translate its ideals into action, thus making a valuable contribution to Canadian culture."

At the "Frón" concert Tuesday evening, Dr. Briem gave a fine, instructive lecture on Icelanders and Iceland, ancient and modern.

The Wednesday night concert featured a colored movie of the ceremonies which took place in Iceland June 17, and 18th. last when the country was declared a republic. Mr. A. G. Eylands gave a comprehensive talk on recent development in Iceland, mainly in the industrial and agricultural fields.

During the week there were many luncheons and entertainments in honor of the visitors from Iceland, and the festivities culminated in a reception given by Dr. Briem, Friday afternoon at the Fort Garry hotel, where the gracious host bade farewell to the Icelandic community here.

This 26th convention of the league was in every way a success and will serve to cement the bonds of friendship and understanding among all our people, young and old. Dr. Richard Beck was re-elected president.

CBC Broadcast

At the Jan. 8th meeting of the Icelandic Canadian Evening School there was present a representative from the CBC. This was Miss Mary David, who is morning commentator on the Trans-Canada Network. It is her pleasant duty to give the Canadian public, news of outstanding work in the field of culture and education among groups or individuals, especially when such service is of a voluntary nature.

Having heard of the Icelandic Canadian Evening School she wanted to get acquainted with the work being done there. The following Monday, Jan. 15, she made the School the subject of her broadcast.

She gave the radio public a very interesting glimpse of the lecture, also an outline of the work accomplished at the School, in the language classes and by the series of lectures.

She spoke of Iceland's outstanding contribution to world literature; about its more than thousand year old parliament, the "Grandmother of Parliaments", about the celebrations held among Icelanders the world over last June 17th, when Iceland became a republic.

The Icelandic Canadians, she said, glory in their past, but they do not live in the past. They look to the future and their aim and endeavor is to improve the quality of Canadian citizenship.

—H. D.

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A Pioneer Postman in Iceland

By LILIA EYLANDS

★

Editor's note: Having blazed a trail in Iceland Jón Magnússon came to America, there to enter upon a new pioneering venture. Many of his descendants have carved out careers for themselves worthy of the indomitable spirit of this sturdy Viking. Mrs. V. J. Eylands, the writer of this story, is a granddaughter. In the December issue of the Icelandic Canadian you were introduced to two of his grandsons, Mrs. Eylands' brothers. They are: Nels G. Johnson, Attorney General of North Dakota and Lt.-Col. Christian Johnson. Three great-grandsons, now serving in the United States Forces, are pictured in this issue; they are the Freeman brothers, Capt. Donald (M.D.), Lieut. Erling and Willard Freeman.

I would like to tell you the story of one of the pioneers in the postal service of Iceland as related in a recent book called: *Sögubættir landpóstanna*. This book was published in 1942 under the direction of Helgi Valtýsson who collected the material and data. It consists of two volumes and narrates the experiences of some 120 men who bravely battled the elements carrying their precious mailbag over deserts, lava fields and mountains.

Mailroutes in Iceland, publicly maintained, were first established in Vestfirðum in 1782, the following year in Norðurland, and in 1784 in Suðurland. To be sure the idea of transporting mail dates back to the country's colonization, and records show that as far back as the year 1100 letters and documents were being transported between government officials by various methods. Sometimes these were sent by travellers who happened along or sometimes taken by the writer himself or at his personal expense sent with a special messenger.

In the year 1786 it was decided to divide the whole of Iceland into four postal territories, and four postmen were engaged—each one to cover his "landsfjórðung", or one quarter with three trips each year. His salary was the highly remunerative sum of 8 rd. for each trip.

The author has chosen a very fitting motto for the frontispiece of this book. It cannot be translated without losing part of its flavor, so I will repeat it in the Icelandic: "Þeir eiga það sann-

arlega skilið þessir karlar að þeirra sje minnst." (These men well deserve to be remembered).

Times change—Yes, often so speedily that the old and the past are sometimes almost forgotten before the new and the present even take hold. Today, the coasting vessel anchors in every bay and inlet to make postal deliveries, which are from there sent into the surrounding communities. Fast moving mailtrucks speed across a quarter section of the country in one or two days—and will no doubt soon be replaced by a still faster method, namely the postal or mail plane—covering the same distance in probably not more than one hour. Speed increases and the footprints of our postmen of old—on the mountain tops, on the unpeopled wastelands and barren deserts gradually fade, and with them fades the memory of their struggle as they trudged with their load over jagged mountains, swollen rivers and frozen tundras. The short winter days in Iceland are followed by long, dark nights, and these nights must have seemed endless and rather hopeless to many a postman who walked all night unflinchingly battling blizzards and storms. But they held their forts, these Vikings of old, forcing themselves on against wind and weather, over ice and snow with no guiding influence save their trust in God.

They delivered their mail and to the people in the isolated and sparsely populated areas it became a beacon light bringing with it the dawn of a new

civilization and culture which penetrated the darkness and the loneliness in the faintly lighted, hoar-frosted turf huts. These postmen feared neither danger nor death. "Fyrr mundi er drepast en hræðast", (sooner would I die, than be afraid) was their motto. They carried the fire of life in their bare hands and therefore: "Þeir eiga það sannarlega skilið þessir karlar að þeirra sje minnst." For reasons of my own I am going to tell you about one of these men in particular.

Jón Magnusson who became known as Jón Póstur was born at Hrófa in Steingrímsfjörður July 21, 1829, but was brought up by his maternal grandparents in Snartatunga. He was the apple of their eye, and before very old learned to take advantage of their dotting to receive attention and in having his way. In his early youth he showed unusual recklessness and boldness. One of his favorite pranks was to pound with a stick on the sides of hills and knolls in spite of repeated warnings from his elders. As most of you know, it was a superstitious belief among many of our ancestors that the hills and knolls were inhabited by the so called "huldufólk". (Hidden people, or fairies). Once when Jón was herding horses he saw a woman suddenly emerge from the ravine across the river. She sped toward him and he in turn, panic stricken fled in the direction of his home. Somewhere and somehow she crossed the river and as he reached the doorstep, she was at his very heels, harshly rebuking him, though he could not discern the words. That night she came to him in his dream and angrily pulled his hair. Jón was certain that this was a "huldukona" whom he had wilfully and recklessly disturbed. It was, furthermore, commonly believed, later on that she was the cause of many of his difficulties in his travels. As a young man Jón was healthy and soon showed signs of unusual physical strength. He hired out for shark fishing,

an occupation deemed fit only for able bodied adults. Soon after, they were caught in a violent storm and for three days and nights their small craft tossed on the raging sea. When they at last reached shore, ten of the twelve men were so exhausted and badly battered that they could not leave the boat. The task of seeking aid, fell to Jón and another of his companions. All men survived.

In 1851, when Jón was 22 years old, he was married to Thórunn Þórðardóttir from Heydalselli in Hrítafjörður. Soon after, they set up a farm of their own, and it was not until ten years later or 1861 that he became a postman. His

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route was between Reykjavík and Ísa-fjörður. This position he retained for thirteen long hard years.

Not many of the Icelandic pioneer postmen have so endeared themselves to their people as did Jón Magnusson Póstur. His name has become a legend in the districts in western Iceland where he lived and labored. There are several reasons for this. First and foremost his great physical strength which was the envy and admiration of his fellowmen. Tasks which ordinarily required the strength of two men to perform were easily performed by Jón alone. It was no doubt this strength of body combined with his aggressiveness and indomitable courage that brought him safely through his many hazardous journeys. Jón was a kindly man and very gentle, but hot tempered if he was offended. Sometimes to a degree of turning berserk, and woe unto those upon whom he turned his wrath. On the back of the photo which was submitted by one of his friends for printing in this book is written a short characterization, and among others these sentences: "He was an unusual man in many respects and a man of strong religious faith. He was by means of his dreams, able to foretell events, such as change in weather, and the arrival of ships; particularly of the mailboat "Diana" for which he often had to wait. This usually came true to the day. A good and interesting character."

For most of the thirteen years that Jón was postman he travelled on foot, tho in the latter year or two when mail had increased, it is said that he used horses.

Once when Jón Póstur was travelling thru the valleys in a snow storm, he suddenly encountered a young girl. He inquired as to her name and home, and what she was doing alone out in a storm. She told him she was on her way to a neighbor's place, but had lost her way. Jón inquired no more, but picked her up and carried her to the door of her home and thrust

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her in, then went on his way. When the girl's father asked her how she'd found her way back she replied: "I was found by a snow clad giant who carried me home." "That must have been Jón Póstur," said her father, "such a thing could not be done by another."

At one time Jón Póstur was waiting for his mailbag at Staðarfelli, the home of Bogi Thorarinson the sheriff. Bogi was an overbearing, haughty person, anxious to show his authority, and demanded to be considered far above the commoner. It was not uncommon for him to grab a sword or a gun and threaten his visitors if they did not address him in the proper manner or show enough respect; and often it happened that the visitor fled in terror before he had even voiced his errand. At this particular time, Bogi had just been appointed magistrate. Jón entered his office and greeted him with these words:

"How do you do my good sheriff."

Bogi wheeled around and demanded: "Do you not know that I have been appointed magistrate?" "Yes, I knew," replied Jón, "but it seemed a bit long to say: How do you do my good sheriff appointed magistrate."

This was enough for Bogi. He jumped up and grabbed his sword. By that time Jón Póstur was ready and caught him by the arm shaking it till the sword fell on the floor. He then picked up the sword and broke it in two over his knee.

One winter in the month of February, Jón Póstur was on his way to Ísafjörður. It was early in the day when he reached the farm of Kollabúðir where his friend Sumarliði lived. This was often a stopping place for Jón, but this time he was determined to go on so that he might cross Þorskafjarðarheiði by night-fall. He was walking as usual, carrying his mailbag. This time he did not even accept a cup of coffee but was anxious to be on his way. He said he knew that he would encounter a storm before the day was over. The farmer then told him that a man was waiting who wish-

ed to travel with him across the moor. — Jón was reluctant and said he did not care for strange company. — “But I will take a look at him.” At that moment a man entered, with a sack on his back. He looked puny and wretched. Jón took one look at him and said: “It does not look to me as though **you** will walk across the moor today. I would rather not have you along.” The man pleaded to be allowed to accompany him.

“I cannot forbid you the ground to walk on” said Jón, “but I will make it clear to you now, that if you cannot keep up with me, I will leave you, wherever we are, and whatever the weather is like.”

The man was sure that he would cause no delay—and so they started out with Jón in the lead. They walked down the valley south of the moors—and when they reached about half ways Jón began to quicken his pace leaving the man at a distance behind. Jón called to him saying: “You must walk faster if you are going to keep up, for so far I have only been limbering up, from now on I will really walk.”

The man tried to increase his speed and this went on for some distance. Finally Jón turned around and saw the man lying prostrate in the snow. He went back to him and asked in concern: “What is the meaning of this, are you not going to keep on? Do you not remember what I told you at Kollabúðir?”—but the man was too exhausted to reply.

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"So it has come to this," said Jón. "Here we are on the moors with you exhausted and a snow storm upon us. I will not burden my conscience with the thought of having left you here alive—only to freeze to death, so I am going to kill you before I continue my journey." Of course he said this hoping that fear would bestir the man—but it was of no avail. The man seemed perfectly ready to give up his life in one manner or the other. For a moment Jón was at a loss what to do. He must either leave the man or the precious mailbag entrusted to his care. He chose the latter, burying it in the snow not far off close to a cairn. By this time the man was almost covered over with snow. Jón picked him up, placed him across his shoulder and started to retrace his steps down the valley towards the farm which they had left in the morning. The wind blew fiercely and the snow was deep.

Late that evening the people at the farm of Kollabúðir sat at their work. Suddenly they heard a loud knock at the door. They became terrified, for it was not customary for Christian people to pound on doors at such an hour! Everyone refused to answer the knock. At last the farmer rose and said: "This must be a weary traveller who cannot reach the window for the usual greeting."

As you have heard, travellers in Iceland who came to a farm after dark, knocked on the window and called: "Hjer sje Guð." (God be with you).

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"Follow me with a light," said Sumarliði, "it is someone in trouble." He went out and opened the door. There stood a creature more like a giant than a human being.

"Open the door, I cannot enter through this crack." Sumarliði recognized the voice of Jón Póstur. The other side of the double door was opened and Jón came in. His cap was lost and he was covered with ice and snow from head to foot. He told of his experience and how he had accidentally come to their sheep fold in which he had left the man. He begged them to fetch him immediately for his hands and feet were likely frozen. Jón refused to come in to the "baðstofa", and was

brought hot milk to drink, inside the doorway.

"I must go back and get the mail-bag. It is the first time I have ever left it."

Sumarliði knew that it was useless to try to dissuade him, but said he would walk with him a little ways. When they got outside Jón asked: "What direction is the wind blowing?"

Sumarliði was taken aback and asked: "Do you not know?"

"No, I seem to know nothing, things are going in a circle, even the ground we walk on. This has never happened to me before—even in worse storms than this."

"No wonder," replied Sumarliði, "You

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have never before carried a man on your back for many hours in a raging snow storm, and I have never known a man who would have thought of such a thing. Now you shall come back to the house and rest."

Jón did not need more urging. He was fed, put to bed and his clothes were dried. But before dawn, Jón was gone to find his mailbag. The fellow traveller recovered and lived many years after this experience.

There are many more stories and adventures of this man related in the book. I have chosen only a few to give you a better idea of the hardships these men had to face.

For several years after Jón Póstur gave up his mailroute, he was foreman in road construction. Some of these roads were built over part of the trackless wastes which he had so often crossed on his journeys.

In 1887 Jón got the "America fever" that swept the country at that time, and emigrated to America.

One of his sons had preceded him a year earlier. He came to North Dakota where he spent the remainder of his life. There too, he met many adventures as did all our pioneer fathers who came to this country, tongue tied and bereft of worldly goods.

I am tempted to tell you one more story about Jón Póstur in this country—as I have heard it told. It proves no particular point except that in his declining years, the blood of the Vikings still flowed forcefully through his veins.

There was a big, burly Deutschman farmer known for his physical strength who owned a threshing rig and was called the "Big Boss." Many of the Icelanders in the vicinity hired out to him during the threshing season. One year Jón Póstur was among them — and to emphasize my story, he understood no English. One day during a rainy spell when the men had nothing to do, they started to amuse themselves by playing various games and tricks. One of these was the well known game

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- ☞ BY BEING AS BRIEF AS POSSIBLE.

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where two men sit opposite each other on the ground, and pull a stick or a bar placed horizontally over the centre between them. The stronger man will then lift the other off the ground. Someone suggested that Jón Póstur be placed opposite the Big Boss. This seemed hardly fair, for Jón was a much older man. But old Jón who had not up to this time been participating in the sports—was summoned. Unfortunately the game was explained to Jón in English. He sat down opposite his opponent and they clenched the stick. The bets went around and the Icelanders breathlessly watched their man. Nothing happened. The Big Boss pulled with might and main but Jón unconcernedly only held it firmly. Finally one of the Icelanders yelled in desperation: "Taktu í Jón, taktu í." (Pull, Jón, pull). Suddenly it dawned on the old man what he was supposed to do—and he replied:

"A, á eg að taka í?" (shall I pull) and the next instant the Big Boss was

not only lifted off the ground but was sailing in the air above Jón's head and far behind him. The bets were collected and the Big Boss respected old Jón more than ever after that.

Jón died in 1901, near Upham, North Dakota. His descendants are now scattered widely over this continent and no less than six of them bear his name.

We hope that his traits of strength, courage and kindness may long live among us.



ROSA EIRIKSON

Daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Bergsveinn Eirikson of Lundar received the United Church Women's Scholarship of \$100. for Grade 11 students. She is attending United College and later plans to go in for nursing.

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Book Review

★

THE HOLLOW MEN

By Bruce Hutchison

Every individual needs to feel that he lives in a universe ruled by a guiding intelligence and that he has his own place in the scheme of things. When he loses this belief, he becomes one of "The Hollow Men," the men without convictions, who go through life trying to find something in which to believe. Today the world is full of such people. They are found in every walk of life, but the particular group with which Bruce Hutchison deals in his first full length novel is the Newspaper Correspondents, whose business it is to explain what everyone else believes, tho many of them have no beliefs of their own. The central figure is Leslie Duncan, one of the outstanding men in his field, who though he had every appearance of authority, sincerity and knowledge had no inner security and was almost obsessed by his feeling of the futility of life.

Leslie lived his life against two widely varying backgrounds. On the one side was his home: his father a man with a vision who had spent a lifetime trying to serve his community by bringing irrigation water to their poverty stricken valley; his brother David, who lived close to the land and was as much a part of the scheme of things as the trees of his native valley in British Columbia; his mother Charlotte, the soul of energy and integrity, who embodied the old belief in a personal God and a well ordered universe; and his wife Nancy, the embodiment of common

sense, who loved him and understood him as no one else did.

On the other side was his life in the world removed from the valley: the political intrigues at Ottawa and Washington, the ever present background of the war and his relations with his friends and the other newspaper correspondents many of them "Hollow Men" like himself.

Being a newspaper man himself, the author is especially successful when he deals with real people, his glimpse of President Roosevelt, his still briefer one of Mackenzie King and his very fine portrayal of Willkie and his 1940 presidential campaign tour.

In the end, Leslie feels that he has betrayed his best friend and sacrifices his own ideals in order to bring about his father's dream of bringing water to his native valley. For a while he returns to Nancy and his children and seeks to find an answer to the riddle of life close to the soil.

But Leslie is a seeker. The last page finds him on the train back to Ottawa to resume his other life. He has not found an answer to his problem but he has come to a realization that he is not alone; that his problem is the problem of humanity. Mankind cannot go on as they have been; humanity is racing to some issue, and whatever happens he will be in the midst of things still writing and interpreting. He is especially blessed in that he can always return to Nancy and his home.

—H. S.

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AN OLD TIME DANCE

It is the night of the long-awaited box social. All over the district teams are brought to the door, lamps and matches are left on the kitchen tables, and families assemble in sleighs to attend this gala occasion.

The school-house is a scene of warmth and gaiety. The week's labor is forgotten as the farmers, hired help, school teachers, all gather in groups for a satisfying gossip. Girls and boys form groups at opposite corners of the building, seemingly oblivious to each other's presence and to the tuning-up of the orchestra.

But now the music becomes insistent. The violin, accordion, and guitar break into a dreamy waltz. The floor manager shouts, "Everybody waltz!" The group of boys breaks up, each crossing the floor to choose his partner. It is a long dance, the crowd urging the orchestra for more at every interval. Finally it is over, and a peppy fox-trot livens up the mood of the dance. "Everybody tag!" The floor becomes a mass of dancers, and those endeavouring to cut in on wily partners of the most popular girls meet with little success.

On it goes. A schottische, social one step, and then a quadrille. There is a rush for partners, sets are formed, and the orchestra strikes up "The Arkansas Traveller." The floor manager jumps up on a chair, and amid confusion and shrieks of laughter the "square dance" gets under way.

"Ladies join their lily-white hands,
Gents their black and tan—

Feet shuffle rhythmically as old, gnarled hands and firm young ones clasp and partners swing dizzily.

"Birdie fly out, hawkie fly in—
Hawkie fly out and give birdie a swing

And you **all** swing out!"

It is over too soon. The music stops, the dancers have one last swing, then stop and laugh. Men wipe their fore-

heads, girls push back their hair and hasten to the dressing room to repair their make-up.

The supper hour approaches. The floor manager takes up his position in the middle of the floor, and as the boxes are passed out to him he auctions them off to the highest bidder. Joking, teasing, cajoling, he disposes of them in short order; the girls try not to look self-conscious as their boxes are subjected in their turn to the auctioneer's wit. Finally, the last one is sold; the men identify their partners by slips of paper tucked inside the boxes, and pair off accordingly. Steaming kettles of coffee are passed around as the girls open their boxes and disclose dainty lunches, candy and cigarettes. The air becomes heavy with perfume, talcum odors, shoe polish, and the aroma of coffee.

After supper there is a lull in the party, during which conversation is paramount. Children add to the noise by running in and out with shouts of glee. Soon the hubbub is hushed, for certain members of the district are urged to entertain. After much coaxing they come forth and sing or tap dance, earning uproarious applause.

Now the seats are cleared out and dancing resumes. Couples move out on the floor until it is a sea of moving forms. The mood becomes excited, feverish; dancers are keyed to a high pitch, and loath to yield to fatigue. But one by one they steal off to the lobby, put on wraps, and leave. The musicians look wilted, the music drags. Finally the heart-rending strains of "Home, Sweet Home" are heard, and the whole crowd seeks at once for coats, hats and overshoes. The yard is a confusion of teams and sleighs; everybody piles into his home sleigh and burrows under the robes. The horses strike out for home. The fading moon shines down on the deserted school, as the last sleigh turns a corner and is lost to sight.

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